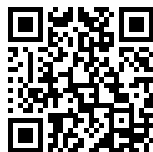

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FROM APOSTLE TO PRIEST

From Apostle to Priest

A STUDY OF
EARLY CHURCH ORGANISATION

BY

JAMES W. FALCONER, M.A., B.D.



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P R E F A C E



A COURSE of lectures on the Early Episcopate, delivered in Queen's University, Kingston, at the invitation of the Rev. Principal Grant, is the basis of the present work, which attempts to portray the organisation of the Church from the time of the earliest apostolic ministry, to the period when the official priest became the moulding influence in Church life.

Distance from a well-equipped library, and the pressure of congregational duties, have rendered impossible a more thorough and original investigation ; but it is hoped that a restatement of the question may not be wanting in interest to the general reader, at a time when the nature and authority of the Christian Ministry are undergoing keen discussion.

Among the works laid under contribution the following have proved of especial service : Réville,

Les Origines de l'Épiscopat; Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*; Löning, *Gemeindeverfassung des Urchristentums*; Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*.

I am much indebted to the Rev. A. S. Morton, B.D., and to my brother, Prof. R. A. Falconer, of Halifax, for valuable suggestions.

JAMES W. FALCONER.

TRURO, N.S.,
DOMINION OF CANADA.

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Two questions of interest. 1. Concerning Church organisation. Episcopacy has no *jus divinum*, but grew out of the circumstances of the time, with expediency as its sanction. 2. Concerning ordination. The ministry is not sacerdotal, but representative. Ordination does not confer a *Charisma*. Importance placed on *order* rather than *orders* . Pp. 1-31

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FROM APOSTLE TO PRIEST



CHAPTER I

FORM AND SPIRIT

AS we take a rapid survey of the course of early Church Organisation we are impressed with the pre-eminent position which the Episcopal form of government has acquired. Few institutions have had a more prosperous and fascinating history than the Episcopate. Its vitality alone would suffice to call forth our admiration, seeing that of all forms of rule now in the Western world the episcopal is one of the most ancient. When it was born the Empire was dominant over the nations of civilisation, and the standard of the eagle rested firmly in provinces far off from the capital. It was then that alongside of consul and later of emperor there appeared another figure,

who, at first the inferior, came soon to be the equal and at last the superior, namely, the bishop; and to-day the bishop is a central figure in most of the lands that are in the van of enlightenment. Such skill in outliving other aspirants appeals to our imagination, and is enough to call forth our wonder.

Then, too, the personnel of the episcopate is impressive. The bishop, as a leader in the world of affairs, had often a striking character. He was no constant quantity to be put down at the same worth in each case, but with him we must allow for the divergence of human nature. We must take account of the variety, the light and the shadow, the saintliness and the ever recurrent touch of the world. There was imperious Victor, who early claimed for the see of Rome sovereign rights, and partially succeeded in his claim; and Cyprian of Carthage, with priestly notions filtered into his mind from heathen sources, who from the proud advocate's chair rose to the bishop's throne, and died a martyr. Then appeared Augustine, the converted *roué*, as some call him, who served in Hippo, and that with firmest mental grasp; and Ambrose, who made Theodosius the emperor do obeisance to the Church; till, in the fifth century came Leo, born at that stormy time when the

civilisations of Rome and of Christendom met in fierce conflict, only to leave Leo as ruler of the world, since men turned from the incompetence of the Empire and its dearth of statesmanship to the strength of the Church and her wealth of genius. Thus the Church took the vacant throne of Rome, and the imperial spirit passed into her great rulers, into none more surely than Leo, who may rightly be called first Pope.¹

So the episcopate ran its race, in which all seemed to be made easy for it. It was a course of victory. No days of wintry discontent fell to it. The joy of triumphant spring surrounded it. True, here and there limited disaffections broke into the light, which showed that there was not universal love for this episcopal dominance; but these the Church either expelled by a skilful use of the hated name of heretic, or else fondled to death by an excessive kindness.

Montanism, for example, was a cry for the freedom of early prophecy, when all could seek the Lord and speak to Him out of a full heart, and a revolt against arrogant bishops who denied the right of speech to the unordained. But Montanism died the death of heresy, as born out of due time.

¹ *Leo the Great*, Gore.

Monasticism, on the other hand, though likewise a revolt against the legal system of the Church, was robbed of its power to injure by the great indulgence allowed it. On Monte Alverno the vision had come to the sainted Francis of Assisi, who had raised in those dark ages a loud cry against the formalism of a set government. He, too, sought the simplicity of the early gospel time, when a man was not saved because the bishop had confirmed him, but because he had given his bread to feed the poor, had healed the broken-hearted, had made holiness a rule of life, and, being pure of heart, had seen God. So Monasticism hurled its shaft against the Church order; but instead of going out to oppose it in battle, the Church opened its arms of love and wooed the saints to its own breast, and made their holier life a kind of vicarious sacrifice to atone for the secular bent of its own officials; and Monasticism, with its attack on episcopal assumption, was won over by subtle attentions.

Thus, Montanism vanquished and Monasticism reconciled, it came to pass that the bishop held it all his own way for many a long year. The bishop had arrogated to himself all the best that was in the world. He was the sole exponent of doctrine, as the Church could not do without a

determined line of belief, the maintenance of which involved some constituted authority; and doctrine, ceasing to be the word of Jesus, became the teaching of the Church as expounded by the bishop. As God had conferred the right of rulership upon the apostles to remit sins and to receive the baptized, this power was transmitted by apostle to bishop, and thus by continuous succession the bishop ruled in God's stead. The bishop's power became the bond of union in the Catholic system, since he was distinct from all else, above laity and priest. The bishop was the successor of the apostles, the depositary of Christian truth, and his apostolic powers were supreme. He could ordain to office, and he alone. In the decrees of the Council of Trent it is written, "Besides other ecclesiastical orders, the bishops, who succeeded the apostles in their places, especially belong to the hierarchy, and rule over the Church of God, placed in it by the Holy Ghost, being superior to the presbyters or priests." "If anyone says that the bishops are not superior to the presbyters, let him be anathema! The priest has the *Jura communia*, the bishop the *Jura reservata*, or *pontificalia*." The bishop was the pivotal point of Catholicism, so that if the bishop's power was destroyed Catholicism was also gone. All unity

was the unity of the bishops. There was the one Catholic Church, because in all the world there were bishops bound together in their councils, and to the *Episcopus Episcoporum*, the Pope.

In this way for many centuries things went well with the Church; too well, for ease of position led to a serious decline of moral and spiritual tone. Her bishops became worldings, her priests ignorant and sensual, and much of her system a deception and hypocrisy. But the critical age known as the Renaissance arose, and called men from the sordid present to the golden past. The world that had been resting in deep sleep awoke. Erasmus found Greek; new ways of interpretation grew apace; the love of science was born; a wave of seriousness set in to which Luther gave direction, and the moral opposition that had been accumulating against the deceptions of the priesthood and the Church broke out in its strength. The appeal was made back to the sources, and back to Christ. No longer was the bishop to be the intermediary between man and God, but each man, *qua* man, was to have free access into the presence of the Eternal. The authority of the bishop was to be replaced by the authority of the individual. Men had grown to dislike the arrogance of the priest; the myth of

apostolic succession was punctured and seriously damaged; the distinction between priest and bishop denied; and the divine right of Episcopacy rejected.

Over against the Catholic doctrine of the priesthood, the Reformers taught the priesthood of all believers. Against the divine right of the bishop they set the parity of the clergy, "Calvin mentioning indifferently as those who had government of the Church, bishop, priests, pastors, and ministers, following the usage of Scriptures, which takes all these words for the same thing." The Gallic Confession (1559) adds, "We believe all true pastors, wherever they be, to have the same authority and equal power under one chief, the only sovereign and universal bishop, Jesus Christ." The ministers of the Church, according to this view, are ministers of the Word, teachers of the congregation, and their governing powers are in no way sacerdotal, but are purely representative. Thus there arose in antagonism to the episcopal system a new ideal of Church rule; and after this, Protestantism for the most part fashioned its ministry, with more or less variety in details, such as was natural in the circumstances of each land.

This conflict of the new ideal and the old has

made the study of the origin of the episcopate a matter of intense interest and importance, and has proved so fascinating that the scholars of succeeding ages have felt themselves pressed into the service on one side or the other—the Roman Catholic or the Protestant. One of the most interesting features of the conflict is the isolated position of the Church of England, which, while rejecting the claims of Rome, holds to the episcopate. Here, within the ranks of the free Churches, which claim to have inherited the advantages of the newer science, and are willing to submit to a severe critical spirit, there is a communion that holds strongly, as of old, to the divine right of Episcopacy. The advocates of the High Church movement in Anglicanism find unbroken “lines of consecrated persons descending with the lapse of the centuries, radiating as conversion extends the Church to people after people. They start from times where our keenest inquiries cannot pierce the unknown. They come down in great Churches of Christendom, in some of the foremost of modern nations, practically without a break to this day.” Dean Church, in his discourse upon “The Place of the Episcopate in Christian History,” gives expression to this theory with that chaste ease of style characteristic of him: “What is

before us is a succession of single persons, singly in themselves the recognised depositaries of public authority in things spiritual, the visible representatives in their day of the original commission, not merged in a body of equal teachers, but standing out singly chief after chief. We see, further, that these lines are continued on a definite basis and according to fixed laws by the transmission of authority and place from hand to hand ; nowhere is the function a new thing, nowhere since the first days do we see it starting as from a fresh and independent origin. It is always something given, not self-assumed ; passed on, not made for the occasion. . . . Other organisations have with more or less success kept up Christianity, but they date from particular times and belong to particular places, and are the growth of special circumstances. Only this has been everywhere, where Christianity has been ; only this belongs to Christianity as a whole. A bishop is a representative person, and he represents much more than the authority and claims of anything present or local ; his functions and commission are of the most ancient derivation, and of the widest recognition. . . . These ancient lines of bishops, representing an authority whose first steps are lost, not springing from the State, not springing from the congregation, not springing

from private theories or reforms or needs—carry home to the public mind that the Church is living, distinct from all mere associations of men.”¹ Apparently, therefore, the episcopal system is by no means decrepit with age. Its vitality has continued to our own time, and it is vigorously supported by many of the best advocates of a cultured scholarship.

This introduction must suffice as an appreciation of the rôle played by the episcopate in the drama of the centuries. But before proceeding to the study of the sources, it may be well to devote some attention to the underlying considerations. What relation exists between the ministry and the membership of the Church? What are the presuppositions in the organisation and ministry of the Church? Is Anglicanism divine? Is Presbyterianism divine? Is Congregationalism divine? Or is none divine, except in so far as whatever is and is good is divine?

Ever since Bishop Lightfoot of Durham published his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, with the famous dissertation on the Christian Ministry, there has been warfare within the camp of the Anglican Church. The dissertation maintained, “That in the early days of Christianity the

¹ *Pascal and other Sermons*, abridged from pp. 102–6.

most exalted office in the Church conveyed no sacerdotal right which was not enjoyed by the humblest member of the Christian community"; and further, "If bishop was at first used as a synonym for presbyter, and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under whom the presbyters served, the episcopate properly so called would seem to have been developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyterial by elevation." These results, since then practically adopted by Sanday, Hatch and Hort, destroy the priesthood of the clergy, and the much-loved theory of apostolic succession. They make the bishop the product of events, and banish the fiction of the *jus divinum* of Episcopacy; not, however, without the strong disapproval of a large section of that Church, as is shown in such books as *The Church and the Ministry*, by Canon Gore, or *The Ministerial Priesthood*, by Professor Moberly. The latter of these writers maintains that there are mental presuppositions, unchallenged assumptions, hypotheses and postulates, with which the late Bishop of Durham approached the examination of his evidence. These he replaces with presuppositions drawn from his own theorising, believing, as he does, that history must never be

explained apart from the underlying principles, and that the true interpretation of Church history cannot be non-theological. In doing which he could hardly have observed how antagonistic to the modern spirit is this principle of making opinion the measure of historic truth.

1. Let us turn to discuss these presuppositions, and the first will forthwith introduce us to the subject of Church organisation. Is the relation between outward and inward essential or accidental? Is the exact form in which the Spirit of God expresses itself of the nature of necessity or contingency? Is the form of government bound up with the idea of the Church? The Roman and High Anglican party hold that the relation between outward form and inward spirit is of necessity and of essence, and the appeal is made to the Pauline figure of the Church being the body of Christ. No spirit, it is said, is possible without body. Just as in man's life the spirit, which alone is essential, must have expression through the bodily organs and actions, so in the life of the Church the Spirit cannot but express itself through definite methods and processes. The Spirit is the meaning of the body, the body is the utterance of the Spirit.

The following quotation from Moberly will make

his theory plain : " The analogy so much presented to us in Holy Scripture, of the natural body of a man, can hardly be pressed too far in its strong and close bearing upon the present point. One vitality diffused over the whole, special organs for special services of general and indispensable use, all needful for each, each needful for all : does not this likeness seem to fit in every particular, showing, by an example of which everyone is fully capable of judging, how the 'whole spiritual body, fitly framed together and compacted by means of every joint of the supply, according to the working of the measure of each several part, maketh the growth of the body unto the building up of itself in love' ? The strength and health of the whole body is needed to enable each separate member and limb, each bodily organ and faculty, to discharge its own proper functions successfully ; and yet no one of the separate members or organs derives its own peculiar functions nor the power to exercise them in the first place from that health and strength. The nervous sensibility helpful to the eye as the organ of sight, or the ear as the organ of hearing, is diffused over the whole body ; yet not only do these organs not derive their peculiar powers from that diffused sensibility, but if the organs themselves be from any cause in-

operative, no such diffused sensibility can restore them. The body is absolutely blind if the eye cannot see, and entirely deaf if the ear cannot hear. The case appears to be closely, I may say singularly parallel to that of the spiritual body, and may very justly, as it does most forcibly, illustrate the case of a priesthood, strictly representative in its own proper being, yet receiving personal designation and powers not by original derivation from the body which it represents, or continual reference to it, but by perpetual succession from a divine source and spring of authorising grace.”¹ Thus the outward form is part of the essence of the Church. It is the organ—the necessary organ—of the functions of those who worship. It is the hand which offers and distributes, it is the voice which consecrates, and the whole body can no more dispense with its services than the natural body can grasp and speak without the instrumentality of hand and tongue. The ministry is the instrument as well as the symbol of the Church’s unity, and no man can share its fellowship except as he partakes of the gifts coming through its offices.

This appears to me to be a false use of illustration, which would treat an analogy as if it were a

¹ *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 70.

proof; and I fancy that the use made of the apostle's figure would surprise few more than Paul himself. One must, of course, believe that the outward and inward are closely related. If one were to deny the requisite place of form, he would give room for the entrance of the brood of pestilential vagaries about disembodied spirits, and the wildest spiritualism. Such idealism is caprice. But when it is said that the outward or bodily is essential to the inward or spiritual, all that is meant, surely, is that under the present circumstances the spiritual and bodily are indissolubly related. This receives verification in many ways. Our country requires a distinct outward government; the home a definite outward rule; the community some municipal form. Nothing exists by itself alone; it is related, and the relation of soul and body is one of the most intimate. It is, however, quite a different matter to assert that some *specialised* form of the outward is essential to the spiritual; so that if it be absent no blessing will follow. It would be surely a distortion of the truth to select, for example, the hand and voice,[†] and assert that these alone are essential to express life, while the rest is accidental. It would indeed be a delicate problem for the metaphysician or psychologist to calculate how much of the organism might

be removed ere it would cease to be a body fit for the spirit's working. But that some organism is needful stands to reason. So the external in Church life is requisite ; but to select any part of it as of its essence, is the gravest mistake. The Church, whose life is the Spirit, must express itself by means of a medium ; but to make a difference between parts of the medium, and assert that one part only is of divine origin, is an error of reason and history. Would it be fair to the rest of the body to say that the hand is the instrument of life, when one part is as much instrument as any other ? The voice is no more to be kept distinct than any other organ. Yet such is by analogy the argument which makes a distinction between laity and clergy. As soon as we recognise a distinction in Christian privilege, we at once give room for the entrance of the idea of class, the unity of the spiritual body is destroyed, and the very danger against which Paul wrote emerges. The layman becomes distinct in kind from the clergyman ; the purity of the gospel becomes contaminated by an extraneous element ; and the freedom of access into the divine presence is replaced by a legalism that gives all spiritual authority into the hands of the priest. The clergy cease to be the arm of the body of Christ. They become the arm of mere law.

The external organisation of the Church is by no means of its essence, and the unity of the Church is not the unity of a body of material form. The ministers of the Church are the representatives of the people; and when Paul speaks of the body of Christ, he would have us conceive of the integral parts as one organism, each with its function, not separated, but only specialised, and being one because of a common faith—helps, miracles, governments, pastors, teachers, evangelists, all in such a way that each is a minister. The so-called minister is one who ministers in holy things, it being his office to give heed to that which is bound up with his gift. He is to wait on or abide in his ministry—a ministry not conditioned by a peculiar gift consequent upon ordination, as if his cloth were of a distinct make that gives mysterious efficacy; but he is to abide in his service, and to know the subject-matter of the Word, making the Word of God his master study. He is to be a specialist on the soul, knowing all its deepest wants, its hopes, its sorrows, its sins, able to read it as some skilled physician, who reads the causes of sickness and has a remedy at hand. He is to pray until his heart is transfigured by the new light of Jesus; and entering into the secret place of the Most High, he is to become familiar with the

thoughts and purposes of God. Such was the ministry of the apostle; but this he was to exercise, not as distinct from others, but as one whose time was to be wholly devoted to this work. Other Christians as well were to regard their calling as part and parcel of a ministry. All were to share in the work of Christ; and in so far as the clergy were concerned with holy things, it was only as representatives, and not as substitutes. There was nothing vicarious, but simply a division of labour.

Church unity consists, accordingly, not in organisation, as the Ritualists believe. The Romanist flaunts his pet quotation, "Outside the Church there is no hope of salvation," and he means by the Church the visible organisation which is constituted by the bishops as its officials. But this is not the real oneness of the Church. So heavenly a thing as the unity of spiritual beings is not confined to any one earthly organisation. The unity of Christ's Church is not like some mystic fountain of sacred water, enclosed within the high walls of officialism, an entry to which is possible only on the payment of obedience to a guardian priest; but the truth of the Saviour of the world is open to all; "Whosoever will may take of the water of life freely." The unity is a spiritual thing seen in the

life we live in Christ. When Paul refers to the Church, it is not to the congeries of separate congregations, a Church whose visible organisation limits its extent, as the later Catholicism maintained.

Protestants also accept the Creed, and believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and are firm upholders of the unity of the Church. With them, as well, there is the sin of schism, and the danger of heresy, and they believe in the affirmation of that tie of connection without which the separate Churches are as links of a disconnected chain. They believe in the Holy Catholic Church, which, in its most primitive form, was Holy Christian Church. But the Church is essentially a communion of believers ; and it is outside of this Church that there is no salvation. However much the Church may be visible in its formulæ and its ritual and its outward orders, these are mere expressions of an inward life. Without the Spirit, which is holy, the Church is nothing ; without the Spirit of Him who rules all, and is all and in all, the organisation is as the empty form and dead letter. We await the Spirit of the risen Christ, who is established in power ; and where He abides, there is also the Church.

Catholic, in its earliest meaning, did not signify

local; nor did it apply to the Catholic system of individual congregations; but Ignatius, the first writer who made use of the term, thought of it as the universal Church in Christ. "While the members of each congregation live together in one town, gather together in one place for divine worship, are united under one bishop, the Catholic Church is wherever Christ and faith in Christ are to be found." The one Bishop and Shepherd of the Catholic Church is, according to Ignatius, Christ or God Himself, and the universal Church is to be something invisible and spiritual. So, too, Paul's unity of the Church is of life, and not of organisation. It manifests itself in the virtues of the heart; in hope and faith and love; in firmness of trust in the Christian truth; in hope of the return of the Saviour; in a confirmed love for the living Christ; in broad and generous sympathy with all who in sincerity call upon the name of the Lord; in a readiness to waive minor differences in the interest of the soul of things Christian, and in a will that is ready to co-operate with the Christian world. In a word, the only hope of unity is as men get the mind of the Saviour, with which there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all.

2. Another fundamental question that needs

to be discussed is the basis of authority for the ministry. What is the distinguishing mark between ministry and laity, and how is the ministry constituted? It goes without saying that there must be some authority ere there can be a valid ministry; and all would agree in the statement that there must be commission. This comes from God; for no one can be a self-constituted ambassador of Christ; Heb. v. 1, 4, "Every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: and no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron"; 2 Cor. iii. 4 ff., "And such confidence have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit." This teaching of the epistles falls in line with the Old Testament language, where the prophet's call plays so conspicuous a part. Ere Isaiah goes out to his work he sees the Lord seated high and lifted up, and His train did fill the temple. The prophet in this vision heard the call of God. In Anathoth the tender-hearted Jeremiah heard the voice of the Lord, and withdrew

into himself in fear, until, as he watched the almond tree bud and the caldron boil, he gained courage to go out, because the Lord had called him. And Amos, the herdman of Tekoa, who tended the sheep on the farm, and "pinched" the sycomore figs, was ill-fitted to go to the gay capital of Bethel and talk to kings; but the Lord called him from following the flock, and he went. These Old Testament worthies lived under a sense of divine vocation. The basis of their authority and of all authority is in God, or, as it is put by Moberly, in a divine commission. But it is after this that the difficulty first emerges. What is this commission? How is it given? What is the seal that stamps it as genuine?

There are two extreme opinions.¹ (1) The intensely individualistic theory maintains that divine commission is known only to the inner consciousness of the man. In his own soul lies the source of his authority. He feels himself a minister of God, and this impulse is the guarantee of his call. Such is the belief of men like Mr. Spurgeon, who, if I mistake not, refused to have any ordination. Thus had the older Montanism risen against all authority, and claimed the free prophetic spirit, whereby each one had a right to

¹ Cf. *Ministerial Priesthood*, chap. iv.

speaking, if it were only for edification. (2) Over against this extreme the opposite is the ritualistic, which asserts that the individualistic position invalidates the whole method of the life of the Christian Church. Nowhere is office self-constituted; it comes by means of the laying on of hands, or ordination. The example of spirit baptism, which is not to be without water, applies to the ministry, which is not valid without the laying on of hands, this form being an essential part of the system. Further, the sacerdotalist holds that nothing is more apt to be manifestly self-deceiving than the fancies of man's own brain about himself and his own aspirations. If personal claims seem to be vindicated by external corroborations even to the miraculous sign made manifest in the heavens, it is at least an open question on New Testament principles whether the whole should not be treated far rather as an inscrutable delusion than as a veritable sign from God. Instead of the individualistic view, therefore, is this other, "That none can be held to be divinely commissioned until he has received commission on earth from those who themselves have received authority to commission from such as held it in like manner before them; *i.e.* when the matter is pressed home, that valid ministerial authority

depends upon its earthward side, upon continuous transmission from the apostles of Jesus Christ." For this transmission only the bishops of the Church are competent. The episcopate alone is understood to have received the power to transmit. Without the laying on of the hands of the bishop there is no valid ministry; and this right has been passed down through all the ages from the days of the apostles. It is held to be quite beyond the power of the individual to originate capacities for ministerial functions unless these have been received. Wesley, for example, could not originate the order of his Church if he did not possess the right of transmission. So if all bishops were to die at once, there would be no authorised ministry for ever afterwards. Ordination to office does not in itself contain the power of transmitting the office; but only the bishop, who is clad with the special title by his consecration, can do so. Such, in outline, is the teaching of Sacerdotalism in regard to ordination—the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.

Let us seek a resting-place somewhere between these two views. While the witness of the individual within his own heart is to be accounted as the definite call of God, and must be taken as sufficient to constitute the person a representative of God,

yet, for the sake of orderliness, there is to be an endorsement on the part of the general Church body or some adequate portion of it. However, this ordination does not arise from any essential form that has been transmitted from earliest times, the act of the community being a self-designed method of delegating to the ordained person the duty to perform prescribed functions in the Church. This, of course, denies the sacerdotal connection between outward and inward, and is the outcome of a belief in the universal priesthood of the Church. The laity is lifted up into the chancel, and a spirit of equality infused among the members of the community; ordination then is regarded more as a matter of convenience than of conscience, since the cause of its existence is the desire to obey the apostolic injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order." We hope to make it plain in the following pages that there is no such thing as a divinely delegated authority given to one class in the Church alone; that the theory of Apostolic Succession is a late innovation in the Church to be explained by temporary circumstances, and resulting from Judaistic influences; and that while, for convenience sake, it may be expedient for the bishop alone to regulate the ordination of the preachers, yet this is so, not because of any transmitted authority of

divine descent, but because of the enactments of the self-governing Church.

This distinction in the theory of Church order is fundamental. Did a certain section of the Church receive a separate authority, distinct in kind, which alone could propagate itself, making a Church within a Church? Did the bishop alone have this delegated authority, which must, explain it as you choose, differentiate him from the rest of the community, and which must confer on him some *charisma*, which others have not? Is there a privileged class, an episcopate whose privilege is decided by historic descent from the Saviour? Or is there no distinction of kind? Are all Christians priests? Is ordination simply a convenience of human device? It is my hope to show that the authority within the Church is not in a divine commission transmitted in material line of descent and confined to a class, but that the authority is in the people as led by the Spirit of its Lord. The Church with its separate membership is the home of God on earth, where each may receive the Spirit, whose influence becomes the measure of his real authority. Let the free Spirit of God ever brood over men; that Spirit which, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and entereth the soul of man not in one way alone, but in many ways; then this becomes the real

voice of God, the likeness or presence of God in man. What is there that can secure the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in men? Can ordination give it as an external endowment? Then the days of the Old Testament ritual are still with us. Rather is it that Christ, the Spirit, dwells not in temples made with hands. The Spirit reveals Himself to each humble heart—to the youth with warm zeal for holiness, to the maiden with fresh delight in God, to the labourer at his daily reading of the Word, to the aged mother in Israel who bends over her well-worn Bible—to all these the voice of God will speak directly, and no act of clergy can simply as such secure or retard that Spirit's entrance.

What gives fitness for ordination is an adequate love for and knowledge of God, and a natural talent for making it known to others. Upon him, who is thus filled with the Spirit, ordination confers no additional gift, but is the simple and impressive recognition of his fitness for such a work. It is the Church's letter of commendation, and the outward sign of its deliberate belief that such an one has been called from above. The door is open to many an outrage, many a disaster, many a heart-burning perplexity, as soon as that authority is said to be divinely transmitted to one class. Ordination

confers no character, but the character must first be present, else ordination will be vain. Christ is the sole ruler of the Church. In Him dwells all the authority, and He, with whom is all power and grace and truth, has condescended to abide by His Spirit, not in those alone who are episcopally ordained, but in all of us. "Abide in Me, and I in you." This living Christ seen in men, reappearing in lives that are holy and pure, sanctified and elevated, in the gentleness of conduct, in the discipline of heart, in the self-restraint of appetite, in the forgetfulness of self, in the supremacy over temptation, in the cleansed soul, is the authority of each one of us. If this Christian character is present a candidate is fit spiritually to be ordained; and the Church has to decide whether other qualities are present which will make him an efficient teacher, preacher, pastor. The Church, as the body of believers, in ordaining him recognises his call from God, in that he is thoroughly furnished, and thereby commissions him to perform the duties pertaining to the office of the ministry.

The distinction in the two views of the ministry, the sacerdotal and the representative, is vital. It is a distinction that is being forced home upon our attention in these days from many quarters. The controversy is not one of words, nor of

historic interest because of the theories of distant centuries. The teaching affects the whole essence of Christianity and religion. This distinction between the ministry and laity lies at the root of the matter. Is the minister a consecrated priest distinct in kind from the layman? Then there is a different demand on each; one need not be so devoted as the other. If he is a priest on a different footing from others, then he must have a freer access unto God, and must have a superior code of morals. But there is something better in the gospel than that. The layman need not surrender the richest blessings to the clergy, for God giveth liberally to all men. "We," says the late Dr. Dale of Birmingham,—“we are the true sacerdotalists—we who maintain that all Christian men are priests, through their union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. What priest, or bishop, or archbishop, or patriarch, or pope can assert or claim any priestly dignity that is not mine through the great love of God? I do not need his intervention to speak to God. I can speak myself. I can pray for myself, and feel assured that my requests and petitions will ascend into the presence of the Father of love. It is not the priest who makes confirmation, baptism, ordination, the Lord's Supper a sacrament or means of grace; it is the Spirit of

God in each. He is the one who draws near and abides with those who seek ; fulfilling His promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

This is the main contention of the lectures that are to follow : that a ministry is necessary to the Church from the condition of human affairs, and that for the sake of order, some form of government must needs arise ; but this by no means leads to the position that any one form of ministry is of absolute necessity because divinely ordained. It may be that one form is more in accordance with New Testament standards than another, but Episcopacy is not of divine right any more than Presbyterianism. Indeed, the study of the episcopate will show that it was a progressive growth. We shall discover most of its features being added bit by bit, and this gradual development will be the most fitting argument against its being essential to the religion of Jesus Christ. We shall study, first, the period when there is no trace of the monarchical bishop to be found ; then we shall approach the days when, with limited privilege, he begins to assume his place of authority ; then we shall pass to the stage when the uninominal bishop is a fixed institution, and as such constitutes the Church. The study may show Episcopacy to be a wise means

of government, and one, it may be, of great energy ; but peculiar divine right will be sought for it in vain. It has grown out of the circumstances of the age, and must rest content with the knowledge that its most valid support is the sanction of expediency.

CHAPTER II

JESUS AND HIS CHURCH

THERE are two extreme and opposing theories as to the origin of the Church and its organisation which have found supporters in recent times, and an outline of these positions will prepare the way for a discussion of the teaching of Jesus on the subject.

1. The leaders of the naturalistic school say that Jesus of Nazareth founded a religion but did not create a new Church. Taking advantage of the liberty of speech in the Jewish Synagogue, He used the right which everyone present had of making comments on the passages read. He did not have it as His mission to abolish, but to fulfil the law; nor did He for a moment think of replacing by a new ecclesiastical institution those that already existed in the Judaism of the time—the Synagogue and the Temple. He sought to purge its formalism, but nowhere do we find the slightest trace of an attempt to substitute for the old a different organisation. Great idealists, such

as Jesus was, have confidence in the inherent power of the truth as they know it in their own heart and conscience. Such sow the seed, and leave unto the heavenly Father the care of its germinating. Jesus felt impelled to found the Kingdom of God, that is, a new society, not by means of political or social institutions, but by means of moral dispositions; and He believed, so this school affirms, that this would be formed before or after His death in a supernatural manner, when there would be an end of the ancient and sinful world, and a sudden entrance of a new and holy one. The moral transformation of the people was the essential condition for the approach of the Kingdom of God. The temple of Jesus was the great temple of nature, adorned with the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin, and which, in their simple openness of life, clad in the glory of the heavenly sun, excel the eager spirit of ambition of some Solomon, clad in all his own glory. Jesus bids His disciples, who have no ecclesiastical function, go out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach the Kingdom of God. They are to proclaim the message of peace. From village to village let them haste; and if they are abused, despised, let them not care: for the Father in heaven is watching, He who is observant of the

sparrow's fall. If persecuted in one city they are to flee to the next, and ere they have made the grand tour the Son of Man will have come. They are to preach fearlessly; for, though the enemy may kill the body, the soul is secure. The one danger is denial of their Lord before men, since He will then deny them before the Father in heaven. In these early discourses there is no question of a new Church or of an authority to be exercised by apostles, for these apostles are simple ambassadors announcing that the Kingdom of God is at hand. They cure the sick, cast out devils, and are missionaries or bearers of good news, witnesses of Christ, charged with making known their testimony to all whom they meet. As to results they need have no fear, for God will give His sanction by blessing them and condemning those who reject their preaching. The whole method of propaganda is dominated by belief in the new Messianic revolution, "In truth I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone the round of all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man has come." When we look for organisation we look in vain, as there is nothing in the way of succession or transmission of disciplinary power in the apostolic history. We find no trace thereof, because Christ's desire, it is alleged, was not to found a Church, but a Kingdom

of Heaven ; not an institution which would last through the centuries, and which would be a steadfast light to overcome the darkness of rival powers, but a society for moral regeneration, whose rule would be established in the very near future, when the will of God, known of all and piously obeyed by all, would be universal. Hence it is not to the teachings of Jesus we must look for the origin of the Church or for the origin of the episcopate.

This is an outline of the theory of Réville in his suggestive work, entitled, *Les Origines de l'Épiscopat*. It is the first volume of a complete study on the sources of the episcopate, and is written with the breadth of view and clearness of style characteristic of that French school of which Renan is the brilliant master. The standpoint of the book is naturalistic, being based on a theory that denies the validity of many of the New Testament documents, and that assigns to the incidents of the Gospel narrative different dates and varying worth, some of them belonging to periods after the death of Christ. The author speaks of the evident signs of interpolation of a Jewish-Christian tradition by the writers of the Gospels; and the following quotation will serve to show the effects of his method: "This is no place for examining the last words of St. Matthew, 'Go ye into all the world

and baptize all creatures,' seeing their validity is no longer maintained. Instruction given by Jesus in Galilee after His resurrection cannot be made the object of a severe scientific inquiry."

2. The opposite swing of the pendulum is to be found in the *sacerdotal* theory of the early Church, as represented by such a book as Canon Gore's *The Church and the Ministry*. To the inquiry whether Jesus founded a visible Church, an affirmative answer is given; and the writer goes on to add, "The question is whether believers in Christ were left to organise themselves in societies by the natural attraction of sympathy in beliefs and aims, and are therefore still at liberty to organise themselves on any model which seems from time to time to promise the best results, or whether the divine Founder of the Christian religion Himself instituted a society, a brotherhood, to be the home of the grace and truth which He came to bring to men; so that being His disciples meant from the first this—incorporation into His society. If this latter be so, then the Church is not created by men. It came upon men from above. It is a divine institution, and has the authority of Christ."¹ Moreover, He has provided for its form of government. There is to be in the Christian household

¹ P. 10, slightly abridged.

by distinction from the ordinary members a stewardship, instituted by the Master and enduring to the end. The pastorate does not emanate from the Church as its representative, but is rather an emanation from the apostolate, and therefore immediately an institution from Jesus Himself. The divine stewardship carries with it an authority to bind and loose, that is, to give legislative decision with that heavenly sanction and authority which is the proper endowment of the Kingdom of Heaven. It would thus appear that Christ not only founded the Church, but also the apostolate in the Church, —an apostolate, moreover, in some real sense to be permanent. This Apostolic Succession is essential to Church validity, for the authority of the Church is in the apostolic office as it is passed on to the bishop. The Church begins with a clergy, nay, begins in a clergy. The episcopate is of divine origin.¹

Between these two extremes, the naturalistic and the sacerdotal, there is an intermediate position, which will be defended in these pages, namely, that Christ founded the Church, but did not prescribe any fixed form of organisation, since He, by His Spirit, would be the life of the Church, and this life would adapt itself according to the circumstances of a changing environment.

¹ Cf. Gore, p. 231.

So far from Jesus being deceived by the belief that the near end of the world would render needless any society of men upon earth, He makes it quite clear that He looked forward to a constituted society or Church that was to outlast His own departure. Whether this conviction was a result of slow growth, to which He was compelled by sad necessity, thereby modifying His early intention, improbable as it appears, need not detain us. Such excursions into the consciousness of the man Jesus are too hazardous for timid voyagers. But when Réville states that Jesus expected the Kingdom to spread in a miraculous and sudden manner after His death, he is ascribing to Jesus the crude notions of national exclusiveness which possessed the disciples. It is true that they hoped for the rapid submission of the world to the new Messiah: and a most important part of their instruction by Christ was to restrain their extravagant hopes, and to teach them of the slow and natural processes by which the Kingdom would come. From the day of the Temptation, when He refused to accept the sinful and forceful methods of Satan for the expansion of the truth, to the closing scenes of the divine tragedy, Christ did not give any sign that He was deluded with the fancy that His doctrines would immediately or suddenly be accepted by the

world; and the following considerations will, it is hoped, afford proof of Christ's purpose to form—not simply a spiritual community of kindred thinkers, but an earthly society—a visible union which would have to meet with the opposition of the real world, like the ship battling with the waves on the Sea of Tiberias. The *Ecclesia* was to be the spiritually organised and visible representation of the Kingdom of God, but without any external constitution prescribed by the formal enactment of Christ.

I. THE CHOICE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

It is an undeniable fact that Jesus wished to gather disciples about Him. This was the custom of the Rabbis of that time, who shared with their followers a more or less personal friendship. From these disciples He selected the significant number of twelve; for it is scarcely possible to ascribe to the number a late origin, resulting from a Judaising tendency which would find a parallel with the twelve tribes. Beside the name disciple, which is frequent in all the Gospels, we find that the name apostle is given to these followers, who are often called simply "the Twelve." In Luke's Gospel the word apostle occurs most frequently, where there are six references to the name for a single use in

each of the other Gospels. This, combined with the fact that the other Lukan record, the Acts of the Apostles, employs the same expression, lends support to the theory that the word apostle grew into prominence in the later days. Indeed, Hort claims that the term apostle was not intended to describe the perpetual relation of the Twelve to our Lord during the days of His ministry. In ordinary parlance *apostolos* was employed to designate an ambassador, and was at the time applied as a title to one who collected the tribute money for the temple at Jerusalem; but it did not contain sufficient fixity of meaning to make its use very significant, and the inference is therefore most natural that the distinction of the term was due to Christ's decision, as, in fact, Luke says in vi. 13, "And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of these He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles." The name had sufficient familiarity to stimulate thought, not too much to check it; and in this it resembled the history of the more important term *Ecclesia*.

The threefold purpose of the choice is described in Mark iii. 14, "And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him (discipleship), that He might send them forth to preach (apostleship), and to have authority to cast out devils." Their

apostleship had as its function the extension of the Kingdom. They were to go and preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The fact requiring emphasis, is the care which Jesus took to instruct them. He warned them against being deceived by the hope of the immediate approach of the Kingdom, against sins of mind and will. He patiently bore with their mistakes, and made every allowance for their moral and spiritual incapacity, so that if anyone is worthy of the title of teacher it is He, who has claimed it in His words, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." The Twelve were thus first scholars or disciples; but their discipleship was with a view to their apostolate—that He might send them forth to preach and to teach. There can be little doubt that Christ's devotion to this select band was with a view to their taking an active part in the propagation of the Kingdom. The mention of the names of the Twelve, His daily lesson by word and miracle, His preparing them for His departure, the revelation of the upper room, the parting message, all go to confirm the statement that these chosen disciples were to regard their apostleship as a life mission, whereby they were to tell from the house-tops that which they had heard in the ear in

closets ; and in this work they were to outlive the earthly career of their Master, so that the Kingdom would be represented on earth by means of them. This suffices to show that it was in the mind of Christ to make arrangements for a visible society of which these apostles were the first ministers.

On the other hand, it is in vain that we look for transmission of priestly authority. The apostles were not to receive an ecclesiastical function empowering them to make binding rules for the community, so that their dictum would compel obedience. Of this the action of Jesus gives clear proof ; for within the Twelve was an inner circle of those to whom Jesus devoted more attention, either because He found the others less open to suggestions, or because He had to limit Himself more completely. He showed special favour to the three, Peter and James and John, taking them to the Mount of Transfiguration, that they might see the future glory of the redeemed ; and to the sad agony of Gethsemane, that they might see the awful ravages which sin had wrought in men. This selection makes it apparent that Christ's purpose towards them was personal and moral. Against officialism He spoke with strongest rebuke, "The kings of the earth exercise lordship, but it is not so with you." "I am among you as one that serves."

Then the bestowal of miraculous power on the Twelve during His career was only occasional, so much so, that they complained of their impotence at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration; and when He discussed the problem with them, He declared that the endowment was not due to their official position, but was the reward or sequence of a stronger faith than they then possessed. Thus, instead of finding, with Canon Gore, in the selection of these Twelve, a proof that Christ desired to train them to be officers of the Kingdom, and authorised representatives of mercy and judgment, whose authority they would pass on to others, we prefer to believe that Jesus, knowing the danger of dissipating His energy, and being a perfect adept in the art of selection, made a choice of apt scholars that they might become proficient in the knowledge of His truth, and be the media of its correct transmission. The apostles were chosen with a view to *preach*, and the Saviour's desire was to make them skilled workmen rather than officials. Official position comes in the twinkling of an eye, by an act; but the method of Christ was a discipline, a training of long labour and hard moral and spiritual instruction. These men were to use care that God's word should be preserved in its purity, that through them Christ's gracious influences

might operate on all the world and make all in turn true disciples. Nothing like an exclusive prerogative was conferred on them. Their apostolate was shared in by the Seventy, their missionary calling was to be extended to the whole Church, their disciplinary control was not to be exercised by them alone, and the mind of the future Church did not long continue to regard as significant the exact number of twelve. For them there would be no exclusive sanction, except such as was the accompaniment of their spiritual attainment; their reign was to be by the sovereignty of truth. But since they were so fully acquainted with the mind of the Master, and had entered into the secret places of His mercy and grace, these apostles have been the guides of the Kingdom, and the Church has been built upon the foundation of the apostles. In this sense apostolic authority must be final. Behind it we can never get, because only by means of their teaching do we know Christ as He lived on earth.

2. THE GENERAL TONE OF CHRIST'S TEACHING SUGGESTS A VISIBLE SOCIETY

This is most apparent in the use He makes of the parables, wherein a certain amount of time is

presupposed for the growth of the Kingdom. His figures make it plain that He did not place a near limit to the fulfilment of His work. Jesus was conscious that the truth must go out into the world and contend with its adversary. He could see down the long vista of the future, and make allowance for the progressiveness of the Kingdom. Hence the parables were in some sort riddles to these disciples, yet are plain to us. They were concealed from all who were inexperienced, but an open secret to all who knew that the truth of the new era was in its germinating stage. In the early sayings the reference to seeds is conspicuous. The Kingdom is a kingdom of seeds which, vitalised by the sunshine of spring, come to maturity a long time afterwards in the mellow autumn. We have the twin parables of Luke xiii. 19 ff., where the Kingdom is likened unto a mustard-seed, which is the smallest seed, and yet becomes the greatest of shrubs; whereby we learn that the Kingdom was to grow extensively until the nations of the earth should come to it, when Christ would rule over all mankind. In ver. 21 it is as leaven which leavens the whole, signifying that the Kingdom is to grow intensively until it has worked out all that is contrary to God's holy law, when each one shall be perfect as the Father in

heaven is perfect, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all His holy mountain. In the parabolic teachings there is that time-condition for which even national reformers must make allowance. A sudden consummation of the Kingdom is not according to the general tone of Christ's discourse.

No less instructive is the outlook which the discourses of Christ on the last things give into the future,—an outlook which by no means includes a world on the point of departure, as Réville would say. There is instead a realistic struggle, wherein the forces of the world will partake in a long continued contest. The stress and strain period will last beyond the fall of Jerusalem. The prophetic gaze of the Saviour sees that between the present and the final end there will be a calm, a seductive leisure, when false christs will arise, and the faith even of the elect will wax cold. In these predictions two strata run side by side, due, perhaps, to the intermingling of the reports on the part of the evangelists. These reports the early Church, in its misconception of the meaning of its Master, confused because of its foreshortening of the time of His coming. One stratum was intended to strengthen His disciples for the immediate future after His death, wherein were to be severe trials

and temptations from the distorted gospels of false teachers; and a very important purpose of these discourses was to instruct the Jewish-Christian element of the Church, lest it should be involved at the fall of Jerusalem in the ruin of the old Jewish nation. But the other stratum shows prophecies of the remote future. Beyond this time of disaster Christ looks to periods of greater apostasy, when it shall be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot; and His Kingdom shall be a field in which tares are mingled with the wheat. Then the Son of Man shall finally appear at the close of the world's history and give judgment according to the deeds of each. The Kingdom is like a householder, who, travelling into a far country, leaves his estate to servants; and so long does he remain that the servants fancy all things are settled, and give themselves over to pleasure; and, lo! in the calm of a distant night the end comes. To this time of judgment even the Son of Man cannot assign a date.

This distant perspective implies that the Kingdom will have some visible expression in the midst of these years of waiting; and while the Church and the Kingdom are not to be regarded as coextensive terms, yet the necessary embodiment of the spiritual laws of the Kingdom in the concrete form of the Church renders valid the

argument from the nature of the Kingdom to the idea of the Church.

Jesus, sharing in His consciousness as Son of Man the knowledge of the divine sovereignty of His Father, employed the term Kingdom of God as His favourite expression of that final redemption of humanity which He was inaugurating on earth. That ideal of perfection, when the will of God would be supreme, both in the individual and in the organic life of those whom He had ransomed from death for His Kingdom, moved before His mind and lingered in His teaching, with a recurrent welcome that shows that He dwelt upon it as affording a fuller satisfaction to the spirit of His redemptive work than the organism of the Church which He founded on earth, as the most effective instrument for the extension of the Kingdom. His desire was to commit His word to trustworthy men, to have it embodied in a living organism, since He knew well that the compelling force of His Spirit would soon bind into the outward concreteness most effective for their service, those whom faith in Him and His Kingdom had called forth, and would continue to select from the unbelieving world. This may explain His preference for the figure of the Kingdom; but that it is quite natural to draw lessons from the nature of

the Kingdom as to the Church, is shown by the substitution of the more concrete form in the language of the early Church. The apostles in their wanderings among scattered Gentiles who knew nothing of a theoretic Kingdom, found in the Church as the community of believers a height of joy such as was the surest prophecy of the world to come ; and no higher concept was possible to them of the blessings of the inheritance reserved for them in the heavens, than the fellowship of believers purged of its outward dross and raised to ideal glory as the Church universal gathered round the Son of Man, through which, to eternal ages, the redemptive mercy of the Father will be made manifest.

3. THE SACRAMENTS

The objection has been raised that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot be due to the appointment of Christ, since He was disinclined towards anything that savoured of ritual and externalism. However, it seems manifest that in this instance Christ determined to give objective form to the spiritual truth which He had been teaching. It is none the less noteworthy that no instructions were left concerning the

correct performance of these sacraments, as though they required the aid of a priest to render them efficacious. The notion of priesthood, if found anywhere, would be expected to appear at this juncture; but the complete absence of the name and function of the priest renders it unnecessary to discuss the sacerdotalism of the Gospels. The wonder is that the subject could ever come up for discussion in connection with the sayings of Christ.

The institution of *Baptism* is to be dated from the time when Jesus gave His farewell command to His disciples, Matt. xxviii. 19, Go ye into all the world and baptize all nations. As already seen, Réville denies the genuineness of this passage; but his denial rests upon a preconceived notion of the person of Christ, and it is possible to find support for the divine origin of baptism even though this verse be rejected. For, unless there had been some such appointment at the hand of Christ, the procedure of the early Church becomes an enigma, and primitive Christianity is dissolved into a fine mist. The apostles, immediately after the Pentecostal days, commenced to baptize (Acts ii. 38); while the early Pauline letters philosophise concerning the significance of the rite, which, seeing that doctrine usually follows practice, implies

a considerable background of history (Gal. iii. 27; Rom. vi. 3). In 1 Cor. i. 17 there is an assertion made by Paul that he was not sent to baptize; whence the inference is natural that he regarded the rite as the result of Christ's command, but outside the limit of his own vocation, which was the missionary calling. The apostle regards baptism as the initiation into the Christian fellowship, so that by a definite act a cleavage is made between the old life of sin and the new life in Christ, while the washing symbolises the cleansing from former defilement. The large place occupied by the rite in Galatians is due to the controversy whether circumcision is requisite in addition to Christian baptism. This discussion takes for granted that the apostle regarded baptism as sanctioned by Christ. A cross light from the Fourth Gospel falls on the subject in the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, where He treats of the conditions of entrance into His Kingdom. The Kingdom is not one of national privilege; but as the proselyte to Judaism had to submit to baptism as a sign of entry into a new estate, so the convert to the new Kingdom must submit to a break with the old life, of which also washing with water was the fittest expression; and in this instance, as also in John vi. 52-56, which fore-

shadows the Lord's Supper, Jesus uses figurative language which afterwards was to be translated into a symbolic act.

On the other hand, in the early Church mechanical efficacy is never conjoined with this rite, as if the washing with water produced miraculous results. This is clear from the secondary importance given by Paul to the performance of baptism; and from the evidence of the Acts, where in x. 44 Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before baptism, while in xix. 5, 6 the rite did not confer on the disciples the immediate gift of the Spirit. So the words of the Confession of Faith are well expressed, "Grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to baptism that no person can be regenerate or saved without it, and that all baptized are undoubtedly regenerate."

There has been a great deal of learned investigation on the origin and meaning of the *Lord's Supper*, which has led some to question whether the purpose of Jesus was to institute a memorial feast.¹ It has been suggested that it was a meal wherein bread and wine, or bread and water, as one says, were passed from hand to hand until nothing was left. Another theory is that it refers

¹ Cf. *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie u. Kirche*, Hauck, art. "Abendmahl."

to the coming of the future Kingdom, and that Christ, in a moment of spiritual enthusiasm, sees Himself seated in heaven, and, as if He were present in His home, distributes the elements, saying, "Take, eat ; drink ye all of it." Weiss claims that although the early Church received no definite command from Christ to repeat either baptism or the Lord's Supper, yet history shows that in its practice the Church felt assured that it was carrying out the intention of the Lord.

The difference in the accounts of the institution has been raised as an objection. It is maintained that of the two passages, Luke xxii. 19, and 1 Cor. xi. 25, where the command for the repetition of the ordinance is given, "This do in remembrance of Me," the first is apparently the reflection of the second, as is shown by the omission of these words from some important MSS. of Luke ; so that Paul becomes the only authority for the meal. This denial of the historic value of Luke xxii. 19 rests upon a question of textual criticism that is far from decided ; but Sanday well points out that even if this command to continue the Supper be interpolated in Luke, it still is of great value as evidence, since it is in any circumstance an early witness emanating from headquarters, and telling of the current practice of the Church. But apart

from the question of MSS. there is sufficient in the records of Matthew and Mark to show that this meal, from its very nature, was meant to be perpetuated. In Matt. xxvi. 28, Mark xiv. 24, the cup is called "My blood of the covenant," while to this are added the words, "which is shed for many for the remission of sins," as in Matthew. This reference to the covenant, found also in the Lukan and Pauline records, is apparently fundamental to the Lord's Supper, and characterises it as something distinct from a simple meal. If it be the blood of the covenant, the whole act takes on a universal significance, which, since "it is shed for many," must not be confined to the select band of twelve, but is for all who will be partakers of the benefits of the covenant. The office of the apostles, as stated already, has no exclusive personal privilege; and therefore this meal is not for them alone, but for all who, like them, believe; and even though the disciples had received no direct command to repeat it, they would have known from its manner of institution that it was meant for perpetuation. This desire of Christ to appoint a permanent feast receives clear expression in the admission of Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 23, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." If we take it for granted that the apostle received

this at the time when his activity as a Christian worker began, that is to say, soon after his baptism, then this command must have been given to Paul within a short time of the establishment of the early Church. But if this command were out of all accord with the instructions which the other apostles had received from Christ, they would have strongly opposed an innovation by Paul. It is therefore not possible seriously to doubt that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper to be always observed.

In proceeding to study the meaning of the Supper as expounded in the Gospels, we notice its association with the death of Christ, so that the moment of its institution, far from being one of enthusiastic ecstasy, is one of sad disquietude. He is desirous of preparing His disciples for His tragic death. They are wondering what redemption remains for Israel if Christ is about to die, as they now realise that fact. What happy release will there be for them if He departs? Accordingly Jesus, fastening on this time of intense national enthusiasm, induced in every Israelite at the Passover, gives a lesson in the significance of His death as related to the old Testament types. He reminds them that even as blood sealed the covenant in the olden time, so here the shed blood is the sealing of a new covenant. His poured out

blood would be the condition of their security. He sees in the blood of the covenant the act of crucifixion already accomplished; and in this way both Passover and Covenant are included in His thought.¹ But more than this, Christ also gives Himself to them in the Supper. The rite is not only symbolic, it is an actual presentation: "This is My body." He not only gives Himself for them, but He gives Himself to them; for the barriers that separated between Him and them are about to be removed, and He will be able to enter into a new spiritual relation with each one of them. He will be in their hearts by His risen life. In view of this we can understand the omission of the Fourth Gospel, which makes no reference to the Lord's Supper. John vi. 52-56 can scarcely be regarded as a definite prediction about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, inasmuch as it would have no meaning for those who were then listening to Christ. Yet, at the close of His Galilean ministry He states in symbolic language, and in the Johannine equivalent for parables, the essential truth which, at the close of His career in Jerusalem He sets forth objectively in the symbol of the Lord's Supper; so that John vi. 56 and the Lord's Supper proclaim in different ways the same funda-

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31.

mental truth. In each of them we have faith appropriating to the full the humanity of Christ; and able to do so, because of the shed blood, the seal of the covenant.

Thus the Lord's Supper is no innovation in His doctrine, but is only the last stage of what He had been teaching in the heyday of His career in Galilee. The Supper, so far from being distinct from the rest of Christian experience, is its completion. Even as with us all there are moments when physical and intellectual life beats at its best and reaches a climax, so in the Lord's Supper the Christian life is at its fullest. There the vitality is at its highest, not because of a sacerdotal sanction, but by means of a faith which feeds most completely upon Christ. The Lord's Supper regarded from this standpoint is intensified Christianity. What at other times may be known in lesser degree is here presented at its full. But the Lord's Supper is so many sided that no one idea exhausts its import. It is pliant.¹ It tells of the wonder of His death, gives security of His continued presence with us, declares the spiritual unity of the believer and his Christ, is a reminder of the humility and humanity of Jesus, is an evidence of the vital

¹ Cf. a useful article by Prof. J. H. Thayer in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1899, p. 110.

union of all Christians, ratifies the covenant, and explains the Passover.

The one aspect in the Supper that seems to be wanting is that of *sacrifice*. The upholders of sacerdotalism deny this, recognising that here, if anywhere, they must look for priestly teaching in the actions of Christ, since this is the single ritual ordinance of the Church. Accordingly, they maintain that the minister is a priest who receives divine authority to repeat this Supper as a real and proper sacrifice. But how remote is the thought of sacerdotalism from this meal! The Eucharist, as celebrated in the early Church, was not a sacrificial act of intrinsic value, but was the commemoration of an act done once for all: "Ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." It was a personal action in which the faith of each believer was evoked by a use of memory and thought: "This do in remembrance of Me"; and the eating of the meal implied an individual assimilation. The death of Christ is the sacrifice, the propitiatory sacrifice, for the sins of the world, of which the Lord's Supper is not a repetition, but a memorial. And, therefore, if there be no external sacrifice to be repeated by the Church of Christ, there is no priest, at least in the sense in which this word was used in the language of the Old Testament, and is employed in current

terminology. Hence, while the sacraments as the acts of a social Community are proof of Christ's decision to found a visible Church, they afford no presumption that sacerdotalism is sanctioned by Him. No details remain as forms of procedure, while in actual practice the modes of celebrating the sacraments varied, even in apostolic days. The Saviour did not legislate for a rigid officialism, nor did He institute a stereotyped ritual. He planted the seed of His Kingdom, and allowed it to develop at the compulsion of its inner life, surrounded by the atmosphere of His spiritual presence. It was only when the unhealthy spirit of priestcraft and materialism beset the Church that these living forms lost vitality, and became encrusted with malignant growths.

4. THE WORD *ECCLESIA*

As is familiarly known, there are but two passages in which Jesus employs the word Church, or *Ecclesia*, both of which are in Matthew. We must not, however, infer from the scanty use of the term that the notion of the Church had little interest for Christ, as if the Church were an "un-premediated consequence of His teaching." When we look to the term which was to become so

significant in the future we find it has a long past, being the usual translation of the Hebrew "*qahal*." Hort says that after the return from the Exile the word *qahal* came to combine two significations, and *Ecclesia* would, to Greek-speaking Jews, mean the congregation of Israel, quite as much as an assembly of the congregation. Jesus therefore takes a term which would have a considerable meaning to the Jews, signifying the assembling of those who had a belief in the Messiah.

Matt. xvi. 18 is one of the classical passages of the New Testament around which much of the controversy of the ages has clung. On it the Roman Church bases its ecclesiastical constitution, and in it we see the definite purpose of Christ to build a Church which was to outlive the world. Here, for the first time, He tells His disciples of the community which is to rise in opposition to the Judaism of His time. His family is converted into a congregation. The figure is said to suggest the ideas of permanence and growth, a foundation steadfast, and part of a process which will make advance from less to greater. The future of the Church is assured against the contingency of death, for the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it; whereby it is taught that the building will outlast the trial of death. Jesus, looking to

His own death as a definite conscious act, could see beyond the resurrection life the Church with increasing strength. But official authority is not delegated to the apostles in the words of this passage. When Christ says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," He does not mean that the imperishableness of the Church is to depend upon one man, as if Peter were the substitute of Christ, and could bestow upon his successors a similar authority. When the Papacy places this inscription on the tower of its cathedrals, its interpretation is as far from the sure ground of truth as its tower is distant from the solid earth. Peter is the spokesman, and is addressed for all. He is the first believer, or, as Beyschlag says, the first Christian, and able to utter his confession, "Thou art the Christ," not from the hearsay crowd, but out of a spiritual communion with God. He had reached the stage of heart service, when he could look up to the Father for complete guidance. Hence Christ's answer, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." These words of Jesus show that what He was approving in His disciple was the spiritual consciousness which could make such a confession; for when anyone could say of Jesus, "Thou art the Christ,

the Son of God," he had the essential condition of a follower. The future Church was to have faith as its bond of union, and the individual relation of attachment to Christ was of the essence of Church life. All who accept the Saviour as the Messiah are entitled to be acknowledged as members of the visible Church; and the simple creed of the Moravians, which asks assent to John iii. 16, is true to the spirit of this passage. Peter by his superior insight had grasped the truth that this man Jesus was the revelation of the Very God, whom nothing could surpass. He had found the rock-bed of truth, religion and life in his great confession; and all who can make the similar confession to-day are members of the *Ecclesia*. Christ's Church was not to be a national community like Israel of old, but a gathering of those who believe in the "Holy One of God" (John vi. 69).

No reference to the necessity of belonging to an organisation is implied, as if membership therein were essential to salvation. True, Christ speaks of the keys, "And I will give thee the keys of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven": and the Roman Church draws from this the conclusion that the Papacy is not only appointed by

Christ, but is rendered infallible, since he who sits upon the throne of Peter has the keys of heaven and earth, and can bind and loose in that community, outside of which as an organised Church there is no salvation. The sacerdotalists of the High Church movement also find in this commission to Peter an argument to support their idea of the ministry, seeing in these words of Christ His desire to perpetuate the apostolate until He returned. He is promising, it is said, to make them official stewards of the divine household, as Shebna the scribe. Peter was with the apostles to bind and to loose, that is, to prohibit and permit—in a word, to give legislative decisions with heavenly sanction.

A simple reading of the New Testament does not justify this thought; and this passage, where the apostle is in the context called Satan, would hardly justify the idea of external authority or infallibility. The delegation of authority is not made to the executive officials of the Church, but to the Church as a whole; and that Peter understood it so, is evident from his letter, 1 Pet. ii. 4 ff., where he insists upon the universal priesthood of believers, and the right of each one to come unto the Father directly, as if each had a key. Beyschlag refers the figure of keys to the office of steward of

the palace, who had the right of giving and withholding admission.¹ He could shut and no man could open, and open and no man could shut. Weiss speaks of the keys of the Kingdom as authorisation to teach.² The meaning seems to be that the Church by its faith in Christ opens the channel of communication with the Father in heaven, and is the arbiter of truth, so that amidst the perplexities of moral casuistry, when in days to come certain acts would find advocates and opponents, and the argument would go to and fro, whether such a deed should be allowed in the discipline of the Church, then the inherent faith of the Church, that faith which looks to Christ, would close or open the door for the doctrine that sought admission; it would bind one act as unworthy of the followers of Christ, and declare it to be *ultra vires* for a Christian to perform it; and other conduct it would loose. The Church was to be a home in which would reside the powers of decision, not because of the supernatural sanction in officialism, but by the presence of that Spirit of truth which alone could work in them to will and to know of the doctrine of God. An example of this comes under notice when, in the Church of the second century, it was debated whether the lapsed should,

¹ *N. T. Theology*, i. 172.

² *N. T. Theology*, i. 139.

on any consideration be restored into the fellowship of the community. Wise counsels prevailed, and loosed the too rigid practice. The same legislative function is apparent in the Church of our day; and the power will never depart unless the sad event should happen, that the moral character of the members render it impossible for the Spirit of God to act through them.

While the first passage deals with faith as the condition of entry into the Church, and also confers on it the privilege of making legislative decisions, the second passage (Matt. xviii. 15 ff.) concerns the matter of *discipline*. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: but if he will not hear thee, then take one or two more. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Many would assign a different signification to the word Church in this section, relating it either to the synagogue or to a select band of friends; but as the mention of the word in the previous discourse has made the reader familiar with the idea, it is easier to suppose

that the evangelist meant to give the same signification to the term in each chapter. The verse presupposes a state where there would be a company of believers with common interests, wherein harmony would reign. This is the idealism of the Kingdom. As brothers they are each to seek the welfare of the other, not allowing a brother who has fallen to remain prostrate. They are to go far in the way of restoring such a one by inducing a repentance that will lead to the peace of divine forgiveness. Should private effort fail, the whole brotherhood is to be called; and since the united decision of the whole Church cannot be open to the complaint of subjective prejudice, as the words of one or two might be, its condemnation is to be regarded as sufficient to brand the offender with guilt. If the man persists in his evil, he is to be excommunicated, or regarded as a heathen man; for the Church has the right of self-preservation, and must defend itself against the danger of seduction. Thus the Church is the final court of appeal on earth; and not only does it make valid decisions concerning what is to be expected of its membership, but in addition it has the right of declaring forgiveness of sins to the penitent, and denying it to those who persistently retain their hard and impenitent heart. As long as the man

refuses to confess his guilt he remains outside the redeeming love of God, and the action of the Church will be ratified in heaven, since God cannot forgive until the heart is humbled in acknowledgment of wrong.

This power, however, is not vested in the apostles to be transmitted to a clergy, but in the whole community. It would seem that the words were delivered by our Lord to a larger number than the Twelve, as "disciples" is used here in the wider sense. Thus the community at this early time is declared to be sovereign. It is a spiritual democracy. In the 19th verse, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven," the same promise is appointed to the prayer as to the discipline of the Church; for if there be a united request, an answer from God will show that He has ratified their desire in heaven, not because of the influence of the apostles as officials of the Church, but because the community has come to a spiritual agreement.

The climax of this section is reached in ver. 20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Not the twelve disciples, but two or three suffice to

constitute the Church ; for it is the name of Jesus that is alone effectual. He is the life of the community, and it is because He abides in their midst that their desires are ratified and their prayers heard. Dorner writes on the power of the keys : " Power over the keys is the symbol of authority in the house. No Church can dispense with the function of direction or government. On the other hand, no provision was made by the Lord for supplementing the apostolate, and no special order was established by the Lord to which the right of official appointment was given. The power of the keys implies the right of deciding for membership in the Church and of establishing regulations ; but the Reformers reject the notion that the power of the keys is authority to utter judgment on the worth of the individual person with divine authority, and also that absolution is tied to the priestly order." ¹

5. THE WORDS OF THE RISEN LORD

Recent works on the Resurrection, such as those by Westcott and Milligan, have chapters on the relation between the Church and the Resurrection. Milligan writes : " It was by the risen Lord that the Church was instituted. Except in so far as she

¹ *System of Christian Doctrine*, iv. 334-6, abridged.

was summed up in Himself she was called into existence not during His earthly ministry, but after His resurrection ; . . . and it was from the risen Lord that the disciples received full instruction." During the intermediate forty days, of which our accounts speak with such reserve, there doubtless were many personal instructions given by Him to His disciples. He taught them to understand the Old Testament, He revealed to them the mission of the Church, and most affectionately assured them of the promise of a Comforter who was to be their friend. At the concluding moments, as He ascended into heaven, He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Here we come to an important evidence of the intention of the Saviour to form a visible society of men to continue in this world ; they were to have a companion, John xx. 21 ff. : "Jesus said unto them, Peace be unto you : as the Father has sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven ; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." I cannot do better than quote the four remarks of Westcott on this passage, which he calls the "charter of the Christian Church."

"1. The words were not addressed to all the

apostles, nor to the apostles alone. Thomas was absent; and there were others assembled with the apostles, as we learn from St. Luke. The commission and the promise were given therefore, like the Pentecostal blessing which they prefigured, to the Christian society, and not to any special order in it.

“2. The power which is described deals with sin and not with the punishment of sin. In essence it has nothing to do with discipline. It belongs to a spiritual world: and in regard to this it manifests the divine will, and does not determine it.

“3. The forgiveness and the retention of sins are represented as following from the impartment of a new being. The breathing upon the disciples recalls, even in the word used to express it, that act of creative energy whereby God breathed into the first man the breath of life.

“4. The gift is conveyed once for all. No provision is laid down for its transmission. It is made part of the life of the whole society, flowing from the relation of the body to the risen Christ. Thus the words are, I repeat, the charter of the Christian Church, and not simply the charter of the Christian ministry.”

The *Ecclesia* is commissioned with the duty of declaring the forgiveness of sins. It is not the

apostolate of the Twelve, but the apostolate of all the members of the Church, that is emphasised. "As the Father has sent Me so send I you." This apostolic function rests with each servant of Jesus Christ who is to go out on his mission to declare to his world the saving peace of Christ. His personal redemption has made him a priest. His own love for Christ and his salvation has gained for him a key of the Kingdom, whose use he can neglect only at severe loss. He is to open the door of the Kingdom to those who are without and who desire to enter. He is to be a peacemaker, either by the use of the words of his lips, or by the more effective voice of a holy character, "For a saint's life is a word of God." As an aid to this he has the promise of the Holy Spirit.

It cannot escape even the superficial reader of the Gospels how Jesus prepared His disciples to expect the continuance of a spiritual Presence on earth after His decease. The words of Matt. xviii. 20 received confirmation in the discourse on the Father's mansions, and in the image of the vine, "Abide in me and I in you." The closing message of Matthew, where they are sent out on their mission, is flanked with majestic supports on either side in the significant sentences concerning the strength that is to accompany them: "All power

is given unto Me in heaven and in earth ;” “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” In the power of the Holy Spirit the Church is finally instituted, and the disciples display their happy recognition of this in the way in which they joyed after the departure of Christ into glory, whereas at His crucifixion they had wept. They realised that He who had died had risen again and was alive for evermore. This Spirit of the living Christ is the heart of the Church, being the source of all its authority and activity ; “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Therefore while the verbal references of Christ to the Church are few, we have no cause to infer from this that the idea of the Church was of small consequence to Him, or that it did not engross much of His attention. Whereas of necessity He was explicit, and often repeated Himself in those matters of faith and conduct whose comprehension required such repetition, it was not needful to make more than passing reference to institutions for whose initiation one command would be as good as repeated exhortations. Besides, Jesus did not preach much with regard to the Church, because the truth concerning it could only be understood by the gradual experience of the days that were lived under the return of His Spirit.

The two passages in Matthew show that He did contemplate a society peculiar to His followers, but this could become manifest only as time rendered it actual by hard necessity. The disciples, during His lifetime, were living in what might be called a Church. They enjoyed the blessings of the Jewish religious community, and as long as its services and fellowship were sufficient for the conceptions of the new Kingdom of God, there would be no thought of another *Ecclesia*; so as a fact we find in the Gospels only scattered hints of the Church that was to be. The all-important idea was that of the Kingdom of regenerated humanity over which the Son of Man would preside. This religious and ethical dominion of God, which was to be universal, naturally was regarded by the disciples of Jesus as finding its truest embodiment in the institutions of the Israel that they knew—in its Temple and its Synagogue. Jesus merely implanted by His words, parables, and sacraments such seeds as, when the time was fully come, would grow to a vigorous strength under the fostering care of the Spirit, and would rend the old forms of the Jewish Church; but as the old institutions fell away, there would appear, partly formed, the slender shapes of a new organisation, which, as we shall see in the next

chapter, began to knit into a stalwart body for the protection of the truths of the Kingdom.

Christ had clear knowledge of what His purpose was in the establishment of His Church ; for while He bore it as part of His voluntary humiliation to limit His personal mission on earth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He none the less was conscious of the universal extent of His redemption. He could see in vision the sheep which He had in other folds drawing nigh to His pasturage, and He delighted to know that some day His Father would glorify Him with the gift of the uttermost parts of the earth as His possession. Of the consummation of this Kingdom, Christ was conscious from the first day that He came forth as the self-entitled "Son of Man." He made an Eternal Kingdom His creation. But He did not limit this society by prescribing any external organisation, since in that case He would have incurred the danger of Pharisaic ritualism and national exclusiveness, against which He had continually to warn the disciples. Christ gave men the new life of His Spirit, and called all to enter into the imperishable Kingdom, admonishing them to wash and be cleansed from sin, and to eat the spiritual bread of life ; but as to the way in which they should direct the practical affairs of the edifice

of the Church, He left no orders except such as grew out of spiritual principles. He committed to the community the privilege of self-government. The keys were to be in their own keeping, so that they could enter as they were led into the new mansions of this spiritual dwelling-place; for as the ages passed by, new rooms would be discovered, new forms revealed, and in the larger expansion of the Church they would find that one-half had not been told of the glory of this abode. All this was possible because Christ Himself is the presiding genius of this building, the unseen yet present and personal Spirit who is Lord of the Palace.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHURCH ORGANISATION

"UNHAPPILY," says a French critic, "the Acts of the Apostles is of all writings of the apostolic age that which must be employed most delicately by the historian." Réville, like many others, regards it as composite, and containing material of very different values. Five fragments are said to be united in the Acts of the Apostles. 1. A series of legendary traditions, obscure and already misunderstood by the compiler. 2. Souvenirs of the first struggles in the Jerusalem community between those of stricter and those of freer attitude to the law. 3. Fragments of a life of Peter. 4. Second-hand narratives of Paul's activity. 5. First-hand bits of evidence. These were all combined about the close of the first century. Strongest opposition is taken to the first five chapters. Holtzmann calls them "the idealised picture of the Jewish community." It is said that

these describe the Church as a circle of saints living together in perfect harmony, whereas every here and there verses occur which, by their incongruous admixture of material, make it plain how untrustworthy the chapters are. We are told that the account of Pentecost and the speaking with tongues is quite different from the kindred gift which Paul mentions in the Epistles. Or, again, it is affirmed that the idyllic situation of Acts iv. 31 ff., where all the faithful are animated by the same spirit, is not in agreement with the discord which is revealed in the greed of Ananias and Sapphira, and the complaints of the Grecian widows.¹

Happily, however, the Acts has found of late strong champions. W. M. Ramsay, whose testimony is more valuable because he is unsuspected of theological bias, looks upon the work as a history of the first order, and reliable in every way. Hort and Blass unite in accepting the genuineness of the work. These show that the comparison of the Acts with the Epistles of Paul brings out evidence of the independence of the Lukan record, while the resemblances and parallels are best explained by a theory of the reliability of the sources. So far from the picture of the early

¹ The most extreme criticism that has recently appeared is the article by Schmiedel on "Acts" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

Church being idealised, the description differs widely in details from that of the time when the work was composed (c. 80 A.D.). The christology, eschatology and organisation correspond to an early period, and nowhere do we discover the author giving imaginary situations to fit into the conditions of a later age. He used what information he could obtain; and if the first chapters are at times vague, it is because he was not writing as an eye-witness, and his sources were not so complete as in the last half of the book. The speeches also are so full of life and so in harmony with the events, that the most natural conclusion is that they are authentic. Therefore we accept the Acts as the composition of Luke, the companion of Paul, who drew on his personal observation for a part of his knowledge, and who would have the friendship of many Christians who had been witnesses of the scenes he describes. He writes with a definite purpose, and the steady progress of his chapters tells of one who has a clear historical mind.¹

The earlier letters of Paul, which were occasional, and were not written with any tendency towards Church organisation, are the other sources for our

¹ Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*; Weiss, *Biblical Theology of N.T.*; Hastings' *Dictionary of Bible*, art. "Acts."

period, and their genuineness has never been seriously questioned.

No one who examines the sources of early Church history can help regretting the want of more distinct information; for at many important junctures the student is forced to the dangerous expedient of venturing for his opinions on the shifting sand of conjecture. The picture of the first few years of the apostolic age must be that of the impressionist who omits details, and leaves to the imagination of the beholder the task of filling in the spaces.

This chapter, which gives a bird's-eye view of the beginning of organisation, deals with the forms of ministry as they appear, first in the *whole* Church, and then in the *individual* congregation.

I. THE GENERAL CHURCH

The first gathering of Christians was in Jerusalem, and under the direct leadership of the apostles, who undertook the care of the needy, preached to those in search of truth, instructed the early converts, and represented the new movement before the national authorities. These commencement days of the Church were very happy, coloured with an enthusiasm and un-

selfishness that were natural in those who had learnt of the great gift of God's love in Christ. This joy displayed itself in a generosity which was the surest evidence of their faith. The most striking expression of their large-hearted fellowship was the practice of having their possessions in common, which was by no means a compulsory abandonment of all earthly goods, as the retention by Mary¹ of her home, and the option given to Ananias and Sapphira clearly show. Then the consciousness of divine power present with them in miracles, together with the rapid growth of the membership, tended to augment this joy. So rapid, indeed, was the growth, numbering thousands in one day,² that the increase is almost incredible unless we suppose that many of these had already been in sympathy with Jesus while He lived, and were led to make public profession of this faith because of the miracle of the Resurrection, which would be much talked of throughout the city.

But with this enthusiastic joy there was as yet little of the calmness of decision which sees far ahead some extensive plan, and lays schemes for its accomplishment. The apostles at first were like men who joyed because of coming into a great possession; they scarcely realised its extent, nor

¹ Acts xii. 12.

² Acts ii. 41, iv. 4.

were they ready to arrange for its wise administration. They were conscious of the presence of the Saviour. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree: Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." They cannot but speak of the things they have heard and seen. But as yet the calm morning hour has not come when the necessity will arrive of maturing plans for the day of Church extension. They are still like men that dream. Their mouth is filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing.

Consequently it is noticeable that the movements within the Church at this time arose because of the intrusion of events rather than by reason of the deliberate decision of the leaders of the community. The persecution that arose in the Church upon the death of Stephen,¹ was the cause of the first effort at expansion, when missions had their birth. At this time the apostles regarded it as their duty to remain in Jerusalem, while "they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word," and the first attempts at evangelisation were those made by ordinary members of the community. It was Philip and not one of the Twelve who, apparently on his

¹ Acts viii. 1 ff.

own responsibility, made the first rift in the exclusiveness of the Church, in that "he went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ,"¹ where he also administered baptism to one of Gentile birth.²

Equally instructive is the origin of the Church at Antioch which was to play so prominent a part in the next few years. Antioch was the most important city of the empire after Rome and Alexandria, having a vigorous population that made it the virtual capital of the East. But for us the Christian supremacy of Antioch surpasses its political significance, since it was by all means the leading Church of Gentile Christianity for many a year, and even in later days their Patriarch had precedence of those in Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Now the Christian brotherhood there arose out of the spontaneous missionary work of men of Cyprus and Cyrene³ who came thus far after the disturbance at Jerusalem. These made the new departure of addressing Greeks, and of inviting them to accept the gospel, so that the early congregation at Antioch was a community of Jews and Greeks.⁴

Thus the Church of Christ spread because

¹ Acts viii. 5.

² Acts viii. 26 ff.

³ Acts xi. 19 f.

⁴ Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 41.

individual converts felt impelled to be propagators of the gospel. The country districts of Palestine and the important Church at Antioch did not receive their religion through the premeditated action of the apostles, but small groups of Christians were induced by the guidance of the Spirit to scatter the seed of the Kingdom.¹

Another important factor in the case merits consideration as evidence that the Church owed its extension to the compulsion of circumstances rather than to the deliberate policy of the leaders at Jerusalem. The Roman Empire resembled the British Empire of to-day, in having a large travelling public. This was composed of tourists in quest of natural scenery or of art, of invalids who desired to consult some famed doctor or to test the healing power of a celebrated spring, of merchants who journeyed in the interests of trade, of students who went in pursuit of the learning of the schools, of officials with their large retinue on the way to and from their administration in the provinces. Thus there was constant communication between the parts of the empire. For example, a record tells of a merchant who boasts that he had made the journey from Asia Minor to Italy seventy-two times, while we find

¹ Zahn, *Skizzen aus dem Leben der alten Kirche*, p. 51 f.

that the number of foreign students in the schools of learning often exceeded those from the home land. In the large cities whose population came near the million, and also in the smaller commercial towns and seaports, there was a mixture of population and an incessant movement to and fro which, Zahn says, cannot be painted in too bright colours.¹ Of necessity, this spirit of travel was shared in by the Christians who, for the most part, were dwellers in the larger cities. The frequent changes of Aquila and Priscilla from Pontus, to Rome, to Corinth, to Ephesus, and back again to Rome,² and the list of names in the Epistle to the Romans of those who were personal friends of Paul whom he must have met on their travels, suffice to show the eager spirit for change and travel among Christians; while the apostle's exhortations about the entertainment of strangers, and the habit of giving letters of commendation to those who went from one Church to another, point to the same widespread custom.

This is of great significance for the growth of Christianity; for, as a result of this extensive intercourse, the word of the Kingdom became disseminated in many parts of the empire, and the

¹ Zahn, *Skizzen*, Lect. I.

² Acts xviii. 2; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Rom. xvi. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 19.

origin of so important a Church as that of Rome is traced to the energies of some Christians who, in their journeys, did not forget that on them rested the duty of evangelisation. Each Christian knew that he was a missionary. Once again, therefore, we see how the Church was under the direction of events rather than under the official authority of the apostle.

But yet another instance of the same truth comes to view in the appearance and activity of the Apostle Paul. With him the early Church arrives at its maturity, and his figure will ever stand out prominently, not only because of his zeal as the most famed Gentile missionary, but also because he forced the Church to formulate a definite policy. His enthusiasm was equal to that of the most devoted of the apostles, and he gave utterance at all times to the joyous sense of God's immediate presence. His faith not only began but continued in the atmosphere of the supernatural. His sudden conversion by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ found parallels in the appearances of after days. His visions, dreams, warnings, tell how he lived constantly in intimate fellowship with the risen Christ, and exclude the possibility of isolating his conversion as if it were out of all relationship with his other experiences. But while

he, with the other Christians of the primitive days, knew the strength of spiritual experience given by revelation, he had this tempered by independent thought. Though conscious of his special call, he also knew that this implied special preparation; and the years of his retirement can best be explained as years in which he made ready for his work. He must co-ordinate his old and new ideas, "relate," as one says, "his Gamaliel world with the new world of Christ," and go through a course of study for his special mission. He must understand the new type of mind, and the ways of appeal thereto. He must temper the spirit of the Hebrew with that of the Greek. He must become acquainted with the philosophical systems that are supreme in Athens, and breathe in the spirit of Greek art and form if he is to interpret the attitude of the school of Corinth. And besides all this, he must decide between the accidental and the essential in the current preaching of the new religion of Jesus.

This experience brought him to the conviction that the days of the Mosaic law were numbered, and that its ceremonialism was not to be forced upon the Gentile world. Faith in Jesus Christ is the free gospel. To preach the gospel he went out equipped with an abounding faith in God, a

resolute will, and a mental grasp of the deepest problems of his times. He went from city to city choosing always his location with a view to large population ; and preaching first in the synagogues he gradually gathered around him a group of followers who became the nucleus of a Church. Herein he was materially assisted by his band of remarkable helpers or missionary aids. All this took place without the definite initiative of the apostolic band at Jerusalem. Paul was an apostle not of men, nor by men.

Thus far, then, the evidence has been of a Church increasing, not because of any conscious effort on the part of an official administration. There is no one board of rulers with a definite policy and authority whose word is law. But the truth grew like the protoplasmic germ by a process of separation of the parts, each part forming the centre of a new organism. Henceforth, Paul becomes the point of resistance in the early Church. The broad and narrow forces meet for the first time. Certain Jewish Christians, nominally under the sanction of the Church at Jerusalem, but making too large a use of this sanction, came to the regions where Paul had preached his free gospel, and sought to undermine his work. A keen conflict between Pauline Christianity and the

narrow legalistic Christianity was probably waged for some years, much to the distress of Paul, but resulting in great good to the brotherhood. These opponents were chiefly members of the Church in Jerusalem, but they are not to be regarded as representatives of the twelve apostles.¹ They taught that the law must be observed.

This opposition awakened the whole Church to the necessity of an organisation, and of a recognised ministry. The battle apparently raged around the term *Apostle*. The burden of complaint of the Jewish proselytisers was that Paul was not a real apostle, but merely a self-constituted one, seeking his own glory for a lucrative return. The letters to the Galatians and Corinthians are the answer of Paul as he seeks to defend his position. And since to-day the conflict over the *apostolate* is still in progress, it will be necessary to devote some attention to the word apostle.

The ritualistic party assert the official nature of the apostles, who, as a closed corporation, had under their direct control the organisation of the early Church. Moberly writes: "I must venture to submit that in the history of the government of the Church, everything depends upon the apostolate: everything emanates from the apostolate: nothing

¹ See Gal. ii. 7-9.

comes into existence on a basis independent of the apostolate, and the apostolate is throughout the assumed condition which lies behind as the basis and background of everything.”¹ By apostolate is meant the band of those who are said to have received from Jesus the power to originate organisation.

The first thought that the name *apostle* awakens in the mind is its association with the Twelve whom our Lord chose; but a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals the noteworthy fact that there is a wider application of the term.² Among those who received this title are James,³ the brother of the Lord, Apollos and Barnabas,⁴ Andronicus, Junias,⁵ and Timothy.⁶ The missionaries who came to Corinth from Jerusalem must have claimed for themselves the name, else Paul had not been compelled to describe them as false apostles,⁷ as it would have been meaningless for such to assume this title if it were not in common use. The reference in the Apocalypse, “And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars,”⁸ would be quite void

¹ *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 135.

² 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 6, 9.

⁷ 2 Cor. xi. 13.

⁵ Rom. xvi. 7.

⁸ Rev. ii. 2.

³ Gal. i. 19.

⁶ 1 Thess. i. 1, ii. 6.

of meaning if the term were confined to such a select number as the Twelve. Above all this there is the example of Paul, who is very careful to insist upon his own apostleship as being distinct from the influence of the Twelve; and his conspicuous eagerness to assert his independence of them in the letter to the Galatians, shows how impossible it is to regard the action of the laying on of the hands at the time of the first missionary journey, as his official ordination conducted by apostolic bidding. This wider use of the term is also found in the *Didaché*, and in *Hermas*, who represents the Church as built upon forty apostles and teachers.¹

How the limited usage expanded is matter of conjecture, but perhaps the commencement of a wider use is to be attributed to the Apostle Paul, who did so much to broaden the stream of Church life. The eleven apostles who were left after the resurrection of Jesus still retained much of the national insulation of the Jew; and they found it hard to work themselves free from the material conception of the Kingdom. Their question to the risen Lord, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" is symptomatic of a frame of mind from which they were very slowly

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, ii. 293.

emancipated, as is apparent in the early preaching of Peter, who thought that the Gentile world would be saved by way of Israel. It was in line with this hope that the disciples attached significance to the number twelve, and proceeded to choose one to fill the vacant throne. It was probably national prejudice that gave a perverse interpretation to Christ's discourse on the twelve tribes. Thus far the name apostle was confined to the Twelve, and as a title represented leadership and originality in the community. But when Paul was called to his work he felt that the same pre-eminence and originality were bestowed directly on him by God. He had a special call to missionary labours among the Gentiles. Accordingly he claimed equal position with the Twelve, and, of course, the title apostle was included in the claim. From this time the term apostle came to represent others besides the original members of a closed band.

With this extended significance of the word the theory of Apostolic Succession loses its support, since apostle is not only an official term, but is also generic. It agrees with this that the qualifications of the apostle were those of endowment rather than of office. He must have seen the Lord in order that he might be a true witness. If he is able to impress his teaching upon the world, this

success is a sanction of his apostleship; while generally there is a direct call from God to the apostolate. When the apostle founded a Church he naturally gained ascendancy over the community, not, however, because he was a member of an authorised circle, but because of his being the first to give them the truth. He was their spiritual father.¹ As such he merited gratitude and support. He was the authority in doctrine,² and in cases of discipline expressed his opinion.³ In regard to constitution the apostle usually initiated some simple form of government; but the details of the plan were left to the whole congregation. Paul will not be the lord over the community,⁴ and refrains from giving advice as far as possible, seeking to develop congregational responsibility. He does not claim any right to interfere as an apostle with the Roman Church, but wishes to share a spiritual gift with them. At the Council of Jerusalem the decision is made by the apostles and the elders with the whole Church, and their enactment is a tribute to the independence of the Church at Antioch. The apostles, while the leaders, unite with themselves the whole community. The authority of the apostle is that paid to spiritual power: a respect

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 14.

³ 1 Cor. xii.

² Gal. i. 6.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 24.

due to his worth and work rather than to his office. The power of discipline is vested in the community,¹ which also is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The apostolate does not have the sole right of conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit. The whole Church receives the blessing at Pentecost, the *Seven* of Acts vi. are men full of the Holy Spirit, while at the laying on of the hands of Ananias a simple disciple, Paul receives the Spirit. In the case of Cornelius the act of the apostle is not necessary for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for Peter regards the Spirit as the gift that comes quite independently of himself. When the Samaritan receives the Holy Spirit after baptism, it is because the gift comes as a direct answer to the prayer. Thus we find no exclusive privilege in the apostolate apart from the community.

In general the duties of the apostle were not those of government so much as of preaching. He was a great missionary, with the function of originating new churches. He did not abide in one place, and is therefore not to be regarded as the germ of the later bishop. The bishop was a local officer: the apostle was a non-local minister. The apostle was, as Gwatkin says, "An occasional referee, like a visitor in a college who acts in cases

¹ 1 Cor. v. 1 ff.

of special need.”¹ Again, the apostolate was not a permanent, but a temporary background. By its constitution it could not be perpetuated, since it stood for revelation. With the departure of those who had been eye-witnesses, the function ceased; and the halo of beautiful tradition that surrounds the passing of John, who lived far longer than most of the contemporaries of our Lord, makes it clear that the Church associated with the apostolate something quite unique. He was the last of a line; the relic of a departing age.

“How will it be when none more saith, ‘I saw’?”

We regard, therefore, the apostolate as unrepeatable, “since it rests on the uniqueness of the relation of the first generation to Christ.” No doubt the authority of the apostle is very real. His influence is emphasised continually. The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles; but it is a moral authority, due to their special experience and ability. It is quite clear that the Lord did not clothe the apostles with a sacerdotal power that would be transmitted to their successors; otherwise prophets would not have been associated with them (Eph. ii. 20).

The *prophets* came second in the ministry of the

¹ Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, art. “Bishop.”

general Church.¹ These inspired men did much to confirm the faith. Paul glories in visions and revelations, and exhorts the Thessalonians to prize the gift of prophecy, "Despise not prophesyings." In Corinth the prophets are so numerous that the apostle recommends them to speak in turn, "And let the prophets speak by two and three." But the prophet held no office. He was a teacher of the word, a mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, and had authority as he spoke by His command. The fact that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, shows that revelation is the source of its life. To superiority of wisdom, knowledge, and experience, and not to any eternal power of priestcraft, did the Church give its respect.

"You shall more command with years
Than with your weapons."

The foregoing survey of the General Church shows that there was no fixed constitution transmitted by a body of apostles who originated the organisation by right of office. But the Church in its progress is ever meeting with the unexpected. New forces issue from unseen places, events elicit new capacities, and as these lead to new departures, fresh lights break forth from darkened skies. Some

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 29 ff.

subtle Power appears to watch over the Church night and day, and turn its very losses into glorious gain. New rooms in the edifice are being opened up. The New Testament way of describing this is to say that the guiding authority in the Church is the Holy Spirit. The Church is experiencing the Lordship of Him who has promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

2. THE INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATION

Definite organisation appeared earlier in the individual community than in the general Church. Apostles, prophets, and teachers were not officials of an organised Church. The union between congregations was, in the early days, one of a common faith, love and hope. The apostles were spiritual leaders. The diocesan bishop was an impossibility, for the simple reason that the diocese had not come into existence. Officers appeared first in the small separate communities; and bishops and deacons were part of individual congregations, originally having nothing to do with the Church as a whole. Only when these communities were consolidated, could there be officials of an organised Catholic Church.

The first place of meeting was the upper room

at Jerusalem. The Christian congregation had its origin as a house-congregation. When the numbers increased, several of these homes would be required for the assemblies, and each would be a centre for a small congregation. For public worship the members went to the temple or joined in the synagogue services, "And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart."¹ As the gospel was preached in outside districts the same principle asserted itself. Some well-to-do convert would place his house at the service of the apostles, and around it the community would gather. Thus at Thessalonica² Jason receives them into his house; and we can easily imagine the scene in the upper room at Troas,³ where they sat long into the morning listening to Paul, until Eutychus grew heavy with sleep, and fell to the ground. The salutations of Prisca and Aquila and "the Church in their house,"⁴ and of "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that are with them,"⁵ refer most naturally to the small congregations formed in these houses; while the way in which the house of Stephanas is mentioned⁶

¹ Acts ii. 46.² Acts xvii. 7.³ Acts xx. 8.⁴ Rom. xvi. 3-5.⁵ Rom. xvi. 14.⁶ 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

leads to the belief that he offered his hall and its accessories for the assembly of the Christians. Indeed there is little evidence of any special building erected by the Christians for their place of worship until the third century. As time went on and the house-congregations increased, the necessity of some kind of federation emerged, and the city congregation grew from the union of the house communities. In Antioch the whole multitude gathered together to hear the decision of the Council of Jerusalem.¹ The verse in Romans, "Gaius my host, and of the whole Church, saluteth thee,"² probably relates to the generosity of Gaius as the one who received the whole congregation into his house. To these city congregations Paul addressed his letters.

An outline of the religious exercises of these congregations is given in Acts ii. 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers."

1. *Teaching* included the religious education of the new converts, and took the place of the public instruction by the scribe. The first converts had been baptized immediately upon their conversion, but with the admission of untutored Gentiles and

¹ Acts xv. 30.

² Rom. xvi. 23.

others there arose the necessity of catechumens' classes. Gentile converts, even proselytes, would need instruction in the Old Testament, an acquaintance with which is assumed in the letters of Paul, and in the sayings of Jesus which soon grew into a fixed body of teaching or tradition, whose correct transmission was very carefully guarded. There is much evidence to show what a large place this function of Teaching occupied.

2. *Fellowship* is the general term for the common life of the community. Hort says it is "conduct expressive of and resulting from the strong sense of fellowship with the other members of the brotherhood, probably public acts by which the rich bore some of the burdens of the poor." This fellowship included almsgiving, which was much insisted on by the disciples. "We seem to see the Church, like that figure of womanly charity which painters from Giotto downwards have been fond of portraying, stoop with tender hand to raise the sick and afflicted, minister to the needs and sorrows of the poor, the widow and the orphan, and hasten to provide food and shelter for the persecuted and wandering brethren."¹ Under the same name also are included the finances of the Church, such as the providing of supplies for the daily service of the

¹ Sanday, *Expositor*, January 1887.

Agape and for the support of the ministry. This problem of the funds assumed increasingly large dimensions, one modern writer going so far as to claim that the officialism of the Church grew out of the complexity of dealing with congregational moneys.¹ Germane to Fellowship was Discipline, also a duty of the community. Only in extreme cases, however, was this put into exercise, as at Corinth, where punishment is regarded as reformatory and not retributive. "Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."²

3. The last two words of Acts ii. 42 introduce us to the *Public Worship* of the early Church. The breaking of the bread took place in the houses of the brethren at gatherings to which only believers were granted admission. The service of the more general congregation, which was open to those who were not professed followers of Christ,³ included prayers, songs, words of exhortation, and other manifestations of religious conviction and emotion. "When ye come together each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation."⁴

While we find the apostles taking the leading

¹ Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 23.

² 1 Cor. v. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

part in the performance of these duties, it is not their exclusive right; for the impression left on one by the record of the Acts and confirmed by the letters to Corinth is that of a self-directing community. Each member appears to have the liberty of taking what part he is competent to fulfil, the quality of gift or charisma deciding the activity. The ministry is one of spiritual gifts, or, as it is called, a charismatic ministry.

In Corinth, Paul does not prevent so much as regulate the free exercise of talents; and while each is allowed to develop his gift, the simple pre-supposition is that things should be done with orderliness and to edification. We do not find any constituted leader or minister who has control over the community; but discipline and government rest in the hands of the sovereign congregation. The only evident trace of leadership is that due to special service. The house of Stephanas is selected as worthy of mention, because "they have set themselves to minister unto the saints."¹ This outstanding kindness of Stephanas, who was forward to take part in the ministry to the Corinthians, would of necessity bring him influence in the congregation. There is no mention of any office, nor any deference, save such as is paid out of voluntary respect;

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

and the community itself retains the right to send delegates,¹ and to excommunicate.²

The first record of organisation is in Acts vi. Complaints came from the widows of the Hellenistic section at Jerusalem that they were overlooked in the distribution of food and alms, and the apostles ask the Church to choose out seven men full of the Holy Ghost, whom they might appoint over the business. It is usually supposed that this was the introduction of the office of *deacon*. Some, however, deny this identification,³ affirming that those here chosen are nowhere called deacons in the New Testament, and that the qualifications laid down differ from those prescribed afterwards. But it is not of so much importance to decide whether these were the direct predecessors of the official deacons, whom we find for the first time in Philippi (A.D. 63), as to observe the method of their appearance. The cause of the first form of local ministry or *diakonia* is the realised need of the time, and the apostles legislate with a view to existing conditions, not with any thought of originating a new office for the remoter future.

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 3.

² 1 Cor. v. 4.

³ Renan holds to the identity. Réville denies it. Hort speaks of them as answering in a great extent to those who afterwards held the office.

The next office to appear is that of *Elder*. This name is unique in that its roots are deep in the history of Israel. As in the primitive conditions of society age was "an indispensable condition of investment with authority," so also from the earliest period of Israel's history we read of elders. These, however, soon came to be an official and dignified class, without any peculiar reference to age. In the Old Testament¹ the elders dispensed the affairs of the local community, and in time got control over the religious services. Schürer says, "In purely Jewish localities the elders of the place would be also the elders of the synagogue."²

In the Acts we come upon the name without any introduction, as in the employment of a quite familiar term. The famine at Jerusalem induced the disciples of Antioch to make collections for the poor brethren.³ "And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief

¹ Deut. xix. 12, xxi. 2.

² Deissmann, while not discussing the origin of the office of Elder, claims that the name was common as an official title in Egypt, and may have come into the Church by that way. "Ere the Jews spoke of *presbuteros* the word was a technical expression among Egyptian Greeks, and is employed in Greek usage during the Empire in the most scattered places in Asia Minor" (Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, p. 154).

³ Acts xi. 29.

unto the brethren that dwell in Judæa, which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." Lightfoot suggests the probable reason for the sudden mention of the elders. The martyrdom of James, the brother of John, recorded in the 12th chapter, preceded in time the events mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and became the cause of a wider mission of the Church. Since Jerusalem could no longer be the home of the apostles, it became necessary to provide for the permanent direction of the Church there; and for this purpose the usual government of the synagogue was adopted. Now, for the first time, elders are mentioned. Whether they were in office before this or were only appointed by the apostles or Church at the time of the dispersion is uncertain in this case; but in the account of the Church at Ephesus we read that the Holy Ghost had appointed the elders,¹ which seems to mean that the apostle did not select for himself, but allowed the Church guided by the Spirit, to do so, in the same way as the Church had chosen the Seven.

From this time the elders are consulted, and manage the temporal affairs of the Church in Jerusalem, and along with the apostles represent

¹ Acts xx. 17, 28.

the whole community. It is they with the apostles who deliberate concerning the circumcision of the Gentiles, although the Church is associated with them in the decision, "It seemed good to the apostles and the elders and the whole Church."¹ To those elders Paul gives the account in later years of his missionary labour and triumphs.

Into the Gentile Churches of the first missionary journey Paul introduced the same form of organisation, "And when they had appointed for them elders in every Church."² However, the apostle does not appear to confine himself to one nomenclature, since some communities give no early evidence of presbyterial leadership. In Thessalonica the duties of the leader belong to one who has a different title. "We beseech you to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."³ In Corinthians he speaks of "helps and governments,"⁴ but not of elders; and at Rome⁵ there is one "that ruleth," with the same name as in Thessalonica. There is no prescribed organisation, though all Churches follow a general type. In the different communities there are differences in

¹ Acts xv. 22.

² Acts xiv. 23.

³ 1 Thess. v. 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

⁵ Rom. xii. 8.

detail. Uniformity of custom is not regarded as essential.

The course of Church government is thus a very simple one. The apostles were the first accredited leaders; and ere long other non-local rulers, such as prophets and teachers, gained considerable influence. At a later time the local offices of elder and deacon appeared; but there is thus far no clear definition of the relation between the non-local and local ministry. The easy and natural growth of organisation out of the needs of the age is the most conspicuous feature. There is no elaborate system revealed by supernatural means with divine sanction; and a theory which would regard any one form of government as essential is untrue to the early sources. In one of the European cathedrals there is a window whose painting represents a priest descending to the earth with a completed church edifice on his shoulders. The conception is utterly incorrect, if intended to represent the forms of Church organisation as coming from above, already perfected and revealed supernaturally. The orders of rule grew from below by a process of evolution, directed by the Holy Spirit. The apostles did not legislate for the future, but for their own circumstances. "They founded such institutions as were

clearly required by some immediate want, or were part of our Lord's teaching. The Church therefore is governed by case law, not by code law ; by broad principles, not by minute regulations. It may seem a paradox, but yet it is profoundly true, that the Church is adapted to the needs of every age, just because the original preachers of Christianity never attempted to adapt it to the needs of any period but their own."¹

It would be a gross misreading of the life of the early Church were we to overlook the strong sense of oneness that held the various communities together as the one visible body of Christ upon earth. In no writer is this conviction more emphasised than in the Apostle Paul, whose constant fear is, lest the unprincipled efforts of his opponents should lead to the disruption of the unity of the gospel. But this unity consisted in the Spirit itself, one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; and its most visible expression was found in the universal authority yielded to the apostles as the depositaries of especial divine revelation. Interchange of fellowship by person or letter, and the mutual helpfulness of the communities, each of which in time of distress seems to have been succoured by stronger neighbours, together with

¹ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 380.

the collections for the saints at Jerusalem, which are to Paul of such importance, all contributed to strengthen a unity which was none the less real because it depended so little upon ecclesiastical organisation.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES AND THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

THE Pastoral Epistles are a storm centre for modern criticism, and are of the greatest significance in the study of the episcopate. In them we have Paul's views of Church organisation, as they were written to correspondents who were intrusted with the oversight of communities, where the Church life was either entirely or partially unorganised. However, it will be well to state at the beginning, lest the lengthened discussion that follows might obscure the fact, that the topic of Church organisation is not the only one discussed in these Epistles, not even the most important. The spiritual encouragement of the youthful workmen whom he wishes to furnish forth as able ministers of the gospel, is everywhere apparent as the purpose of the aged apostle.

The advanced critic declares these letters to be

a literary fiction dating from the second, or, forming the most favourable estimate, from the end of the first century. It is claimed that the absence of any fitting historical situation for the letters in the life of the apostle lends additional significance to the novelty of language and thought. Only one-fifth of the words of these Epistles reappear in the other writings of the apostle: while the form of Christianity is not Pauline. It is said that a "detailed discussion proves that our Epistles bear throughout the traces of post-apostolic conditions, and the marks of an age in which tradition and Church organisation had become the watch-words, when, as belief in the Parousia subsided, the need of a treaty of peace with State and society, and the need of a completed Church Christianity in presence of the germinating gnosis, became urgent."¹

It is maintained that the ecclesiastical situation implies the existence of communities that have a considerable history behind them, just as the doctrinal controversies presuppose a formulated creed. A stray bit of liturgy or Church hymnology is discovered in such a passage as, "He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory."² The

¹ Beyschlag, *N.T. Theology*, ii. 503.

² 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Church services include the office of a constituted reader: "Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching."¹ Definite prayers are made, especially for kings and magistrates; while, in the sentences, "Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of the seed of David according to my gospel," "Jesus Christ who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate," "Christ Jesus who shall judge the living and the dead,"² there are evidences of a *Regula Fidei* or Creed in course of construction.

Réville believes that the Pastorals are a preface to the Ignatian Epistles, in that, though lacking the complete detail of the Ignatian episcopate, they have the germ that must grow into that form of government. He finds in the author a desire to guarantee the faithful transmission of authentic teaching on the Person of Christ, and a tone very different from that of the Syro-Palestinian churches. "The fragrance blown from the meadows and country side of Galilee, and the poetic institutions of the early gospel, which reappear in the Epistle of James and the *Didaché*, are wanting in these letters, permeated as they are with a keen ecclesiastical spirit that identifies Paulinism with the gospel."

Timothy and Titus are the delegates of the

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 13.

² 1 Tim. vi. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 8, iv. 1.

apostles, chiefly with a view to the continuance of true doctrine, the aim of the writer being to guard the transmission and preservation of the deposit of truth. "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to protect that which He has committed unto me until that day." Young Timothy is ordered to hold fast the deposit, and transmit it to faithful men. The learned Frenchman discovers traces of the officialism of the later Church which would preserve its traditions as sacred. The freedom of the early days when each had a charisma or gift, when apostle, prophet, and teacher went on their rounds from congregation to congregation, when the community was a grand democracy, is yielding to an ecclesiasticism where mechanical and sacerdotal conceptions reign. It is admitted that the officialism is not highly developed. As yet the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition is not attained, whereby the combined assent of the apostles becomes the test of truth. The authority of Paul is supreme.

Other advanced critics emphasise the Church government of the Pastorals even more than Réville, and point out the marks of a strict system of discipline which necessitates their late date. Holtzmann sees a distinction between the clergy and laity, lower grades of the ministry, and other

features of sacerdotalism consonant only with the second or third century. In general, all who agree in denying the authenticity of the Pastorals, agree also in making prominent their sacerdotal tendency towards the Catholic teaching of the later years.

It is of interest to observe how extremes meet. There is another class of students who also appeal to the sacerdotalism of the Pastorals, *i.e.* the ritualistic school. The extreme critic and the High Anglican for once can shake hands and swear a truce. Each finds here the developed state of the ministry, and the evidences of a later Church system. These defenders of the episcopate say that Timothy and Titus are forerunners of the monarchical bishop. Gore regards the apostles as the ordainers of a regular clergy, who have power to communicate some special grace of ordination by the laying on of hands. In the ceremony of ordination as shown in the Pastorals, we have the "sacerdotal conception of a special order in the Church, differentiated by a special endowment." Thus critic and churchman draw very near in their estimate of the Church organisation outlined in the Pastorals. But the truce is shortlived indeed, for the moment their hands meet, the vexed question of the date forces them apart again. The advanced critic denies the authenticity, but accepts the sacerdotalism of

the Pastorals. The High Anglican accepts the sacerdotalism and also the authenticity. The present contention is that while the authenticity is to be accepted, the sacerdotalism of the letters cannot be proved.

It is not within the scope of our purpose to discuss at length the dates of the New Testament books, and a few words must suffice to point to the method of defence. Hort, who finds the language to be the only real difficulty in the way of the acceptance of these works, adding that other objections have little weight with him, adheres to their authenticity; and such authority is not to be despised. As to the doctrine of the Epistles, even Réville admits that the supposed forms of Gnosticism attacked in the course of argument are too faint in their outline to furnish any means of identifying them with the Gnosticism of the second century;¹ and we have the estimate of the acute Renan, who in literary judgments is a master, that the reader of these letters can feel the influence of Paul in the "sort of sobriety in mysticism, and amid the strongest excesses of faith in the supernatural, in the great bottom of rectitude and sincerity." One of

¹ With the admission that there was a pre-Christian Gnosticism this class of objections loses much of its force. See Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche jüd. Gnosticismus*.

the strongest critics in the defence of the Pastorals is Weiss of Berlin.¹ His commentary furnishes a most satisfactory treatment, and contains the following sentences, which are worthy of quotation: "We must admit that the hypothesis of the late date of these letters has gained for us very little fruit in the way of affording any better historical apprehension of their meaning. So far from their riddle being solved, through the supposition of their spuriousness, there arise new difficulties; and more perplexing riddles emerge as a late date is assigned to them. This is the reason why even he who finds difficulties in the way of accepting these letters as Pauline finds still more in rejecting them." With this Zahn agrees. Harnack and Jülicher accept parts of the letters as genuine, and suppose that they were worked over by some disciple of the apostle; concerning which Gregory of Leipzig says: "No one has yet suggested any explanation of the problem which is one-half so plausible as the approximate genuineness. When will our science learn that it is the most unscientific thing in the world to give up a tradition without severe compulsion, before we have anything to put in its place?"

But it is time to proceed to the doctrine of Church organisation in the Pastorals. It will be

¹ Weiss, *Briefe an Tim, u, Tit*, 18.

my effort to defend the contention of the previous chapters: that the apostles imitated their Master in abstaining from prescribing an absolute form of organisation for the Church which He founded. While they formed Churches, they did not compel any hard and fast type of government; but finding certain methods in general use they accepted these, and regarded them from the spiritual rather than the sacerdotal viewpoint.

Are the following words of the Anglican Ordinal justified by the evidence of the epistles? "It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church, bishops, priests, and deacons." The discussion of this will plunge us at once into that vortex of controversy, the relation between bishop and elder (*ἐπίσκοπος* and *πρεσβύτερος*); and as the history of these terms is the history of Church organisation, an outline of the discussion becomes necessary.¹

One of the central questions in the study of the episcopate is whether bishop and elder were originally identical, both names designating the same office, so that the monarchical bishop is an after

¹ I am much indebted to Löning, *Gemeindeverfassung des Urchristentums*.

result by which the president of the college of Presbyters gained gradually the control ; or whether from the beginning the offices of bishop and elder were distinct. Since the time of Jerome the identity has been maintained and denied with equal zeal and learning. Within the Roman fold during the earlier centuries there was freedom of opinion, as is seen in the words of Thomas Aquinas, "concerning bishops and elders we may speak in a twofold way ; as to name they were the same so that at one time they are not distinguished ; but in another sense there was a distinction even from the time of the apostles." But when Huss and Wycliffe began to cast doubt on the validity of the Roman bishop, and when Luther and Calvin declared the doctrine of apostolic succession to be a fiction, and rattled the loose joints in the ecclesiastical armour of the Church, Rome felt that it was time to take decided measures. Accordingly in the Council of Trent, which as a reforming council was an answer to these attacks, this question was settled by decree. "If any will say that the bishops are not superior to the presbyters : let him be anathema." But the dictum that men can *make* history is only applicable to the future and is not of much service concerning the past ; so that we do not wonder to find that the debate did not cease because of this decree.

The Reformers proclaimed a universal priesthood, the original equality of bishop and elder, and the lay character of the presbyter, who was in no way a priest with supernatural grace because of ordination. They looked on the episcopate as of human origin, and the distinction between bishop and elder as only a difference in name. Protestant ministers have spiritual rights, but have no exclusive supernatural grace. Their chief ministry is that of the Word of God. They are instructors, charged with making known the teaching of God as found in the Scriptures. The sacraments as they administer them have efficacy only in so far as they are received by the faithful, who are instructed in the Word of God and through faith place themselves in the way to receive the blessing. Thus did Protestant Churches of Germany, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands attack the old stronghold of the Catholic Church: the last three going so far as to put in their Confessions that the Presbyterian form of government was the only one that conformed with the Word of God. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, with wise precaution, abstains from any dogmatic statement in regard to the form of government: "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of the Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of Church

officers distinct from the civil magistrate.”¹ Presbyterians claim that their form of government is “founded on and agreeable to the Word of God.”

The High Anglican branch of the Reformed Church was the only one within Protestantism to hold to the doctrine of apostolic succession, and to the sacerdotal theory of the ministry. Since 1650 the debate has continued, often with great bitterness. “On both sides the most famous Church historians took part in the strife, which had not only a scientific interest, but also was complicated with theological and political issues. While on one side such men as Hall, Ussher, Hammond, Pearson pled for Episcopacy, on the other side Presbyterianism was supported by Milton, Blondel, Daillé, and Vitringa.”²

At the commencement of this century Church history passed into a new and critical era, for in the battles of the Tübingen school the old problems were forced into positions where new lights broke on them. Baur, more than any other, has left an impress on the nineteenth century; and although few of his positions are accepted to-day, modern theological science recognises its debt of gratitude to him for many new fields which, as the result of his stimulating studies, have been opened up. He

¹ Chap. XXX.

² Löning.

was prolific in suggestions, and to many proved a theological irritant. Baur attempted to derive the congregation from the family, at whose head was the family leader, who, because of his age, was called elder, or bishop as the directing influence of the small gathering. As time went on several of these house-congregations would unite, with a plurality of elders and bishops as the result; but since the primitive form was that of a single head, the many would be reduced to the one bishop. In this historical solution of Baur, students saw traces of the Hegelian method by which he was dominated.

About the same time Rothe attempted to show that, while bishop and elder were originally identical, at the destruction of Jerusalem the surviving apostles, John, Philip, and Andrew, organised the Church in Asia Minor on the episcopal model, John being the leading spirit in this change. Succeeding criticism inclined towards the identification of bishop and elder, and regarded the bishop of the second century as the president of the college of Presbyters. Lightfoot seemed to have decided the question by his broad learning and sound judgment. His language is, "If bishop was at first used as a synonym for presbyter, and afterwards came to designate the higher officer

under whom the presbyters served, the episcopate properly so called would seem to have been developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyterial by elevation, and the title which was originally common to all came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them."¹

At present the High Church scholars admit the similarity of the terms. Gore speaks of elder-bishops, and Moberly calls attention to Acts xx. 17, 28 as a sufficient proof that the terms ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are employed in the Acts interchangeably. Thus there appeared to be consensus of opinion among scholars that the origin of the episcopate cannot be discovered in the original distinction of bishop and elder.

But, in good sooth, in science the unexpected is constantly happening: and it turns out that some modern writers on Church government are inclined to deny this position which seemed so sure, and to maintain once again the dissimilarity of bishop and elder. While the earlier investigations had taken account of the internal development of the Church and of its relation to the Jewish synagogue, it is now affirmed that sufficient regard was not paid to

¹ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 196.

the necessary infiltration of the pagan spirit of Greece and Rome, which infected the Christian world. According to this theory, the Church took on the features of social institutions and administration as they existed among the contemporary Romans. As the Old Testament is now passing through the test of archæological inscription, so the New Testament has had its inscription stage, wherein the discoveries in Rome and Asia Minor were turned into service for the production of a picture of primitive Church life.

Renan was the first to appeal to the part taken by outside institutions on Christianity, and furnished a new historical point of view, in that he found parallels between the early Christian congregation and the Greek-Roman world, with its religious organisations, clubs, and societies. Foucart, Lüders, Heinrici, and Weingarten took up his suggestions and carried them further; and in 1880 Hatch brought a great erudition to bear along the same lines. He, if any, has made Church history a tale of entrancing interest; and though his conclusions are being much modified, his work on the *Organisation of the Early Christian Church* remains a classic. As in his Hibbert Lectures on the *Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* he made it his purpose to show that Greek philosophy

had been the moulding power that led to the development of doctrine, so in the Church organisation Hatch found the reappearance of the organisations of Rome and Greece. He taught that the Christian communities, while drawing much from Judaism, were led to constitute themselves after the type of religious associations in the land of Greece, and that before they had drawn upon themselves special repressive measures on the part of the Roman authorities, they were treated by the governments as simple religious societies of a private nature, analogous to those that existed in great numbers throughout the empire. The office of elder Hatch recognises to be of Jewish birth, and the duty of the college of elders is to care for the discipline and teaching of the community. But, since from the earliest days the supervision of funds for the poor and the sick was an essential factor in the Church life, the necessity of a finance department arose. In the Gentile churches of Asia Minor and Syria the office of financing came to be exercised by one whose name was *ἐπισκοπος*, a title applied in contemporary inscriptions to an officer of the religious clubs. The members of the Presbytery, in so far as they had to manage the funds of the Church, were called bishops; and in the course of the second century,

the council of elders requiring a president, to be especially responsible for the distribution of funds, the elder who had chief control over the moneys was raised into a monarchical position, with the title of bishop. By the third century, the bishop gained supremacy in the sphere of teaching and discipline as well as of finance.

Harnack of Berlin, the brilliant author of the *History of Dogma*, entertained much sympathy for Hatch, translating his book into German with extensive annotations, which, while supporting him in the main, differed in details. He insisted even more than Hatch upon the fundamental distinction between bishop and elder as representing two separate forms of organisation; the bishop having it as his duty to distribute the funds, to receive the offerings at the worship of the community, and as a result of this to superintend the conduct of the service; while the elder had nothing to do with the worship of the Church, but was concerned altogether with discipline and government. The function of teaching and preaching would, for the most part, be in the hands of the non-local ministry, apostles, prophets, and teachers.

On somewhat different grounds from those of Hatch, the distinction of elder and bishop is still maintained by many. Réville holds that from the

first there was a division of functions in the early Church, spiritual and administrative. The former were at the start exercised solely by believers possessed with a *charisma*: so that the early Church was charismatic, each member taking part as the Spirit guided. In the primitive community—sovereign and entirely democratic—the Christian people were the sole judge of the teaching with which the Spirit of God inspired certain of the apostles of Christ. From the first, however, there arose in each church a group of believers more zealous than the rest, taking more to heart the business of the community, and distinguished by the ardour and persevering devotion of their piety. These are the *προϊστάμενοι*¹ and *πρεσβύτεροι*, that is, the spiritual notables, the Christians of the old stock, and not simply the most aged members of the community. These presbyters soon came to form a closed board of directors, or a presbyterial council, into whose ranks admission was restricted. They exercised in general the care of souls, and soon gained especial authority. Their function was to catechise believers; and they monopolised more and more the instruction of the Church, much to the detriment of the charismatic or inspired class.

¹ 1 Thess. v. 12.

The administrative function was quite separate from this, and was in the hands of the ἐπίσκοπος. But ere long the control over discipline came to be associated with the duty of administration. Thus Réville differs from Hatch and Harnack in ascribing the power of discipline to the bishop and not to the elder. Allen in his *Christian Institutions* also draws a distinction between elder and bishop; and McGiffert regards the elder as an unofficial term, one of the class of the aged, the bishop being an official chosen from this class.

That there should be a relation between the Church and contemporary club life is an intensely fascinating idea, and it is quite possible that the widespread spirit of brotherhood as shown in the guilds may have facilitated the growth of Church organisation to some extent. We see in these clubs what problems interested the religious people of the time, and what was the thought of the great mass of their members. However, the attempt to explain the organisation of the Christian Church from heathen societies has as yet been unsuccessful. There was no uniformity in the constitution of these societies: and the simple fact that the clubs supplied different wants from those to which the Church ministered is suggestive. It is true that the clubs had their common meals, and funds for

burial. The *Columbaria* were analogous to the Catacombs. But nothing more was required of the members of these clubs than to share in the business, the payment of fees, and the attendance on the common meals. There was no rule of conduct prescribed for the members, and religion was not a frequent theme of discussion in the societies. The ennobling results on the membership were very few. One authority goes so far as to say that the development of club life instead of advancing humanity tended towards a retrograde movement.¹

On the other hand, the Christian community was profoundly different, and had as its *raison d'être* the spiritual improvement of its members and the cultivation of an ethical life, whose chief end was not social, but religious. In fact, although single customs and habits of the club might have been expected to reappear in the Church, yet thus far their influence has not been made very evident. Any ceremonies of the Church emerging from the heathen world in the early times are due to the

¹ In discussing the relation of Christianity to the clubs, Boissier writes: "Without wishing to disparage the usefulness of the Colleges, we must remember that the good they have done did not go beyond certain limits, and was often on the surface. They lacked the force necessary to move society from its foundations. It was in the religious sentiment that Christianity has found the power to remould the world. This sentiment was very weak in the Colleges" (*La Religion Romaine*, ii. 302).

national forms of public worship in vogue, and not to the club life. As at a later time contemporary Judaism affords many parallels with the sacerdotalism of the Church, so here we would be inclined to associate the Christian and the Jew rather than the Christian and the pagan. One of the many interesting parts of Ramsay's work is his proof that the Greek world entered the Church by way of the synagogue.

In regard to Hatch's contention that the bishop's office was financial, it may be said, that such an importance placed on the distribution of money seems out of proportion. Although the love of money was always a root of evil, yet if at any time the Church was less influenced by the glamour of wealth, surely it was in those primitive days: and it is untrue to the tone of the New Testament to believe that the chief distinction of the office most highly esteemed was the distribution of money. Surely the finance minister with his budget was not the ruling personage. Rather would we say that the ministry of doctrine was paramount. The work of teaching and edification ranked higher than that of financing.¹

¹ In Judaism the authentic exposition of the Torah and the demands of the law rendered obligatory an office of Rabbins and elders, who were the wise men versed in the law. Weber says:

Moreover, there is not sufficient evidence to show that the word *ἐπίσκοπος* bears a technical meaning. It is unwarrantable to take the title of bishop as a recognised term for the work of financing. The word occurs in the second and third centuries in a few inscriptions in districts east of Jordan, where the *ἐπίσκοποι* formed a guild with municipal control; but this and any other instances of the same meaning of the word are inconclusive. Besides, the frequent occurrence in the LXX. of the word *ἐπισκοπεῖν* in the general sense of oversight, suggests the possibility of a biblical origin for the term; and under these circumstances it is better to lay little stress upon the Greek origin of the name.¹

The New Testament sources supply us with very little evidence to support the contention that bishop and elder were different offices in the primitive Church. The word bishop is notably absent from the Acts, appearing only in the passage xx. 28, where its identity with elder is beyond doubt; for

“The office of wise man unites in itself, as one especially cared for by God, ecclesiastical, priestly and prophetic power and value, enjoys from the side of God a special dispensation of the spirit and of honour, and has also the respect and support of the community. It depends upon the knowledge of the Thora.” So also in the early Church the élite were the *teachers* who were versed in the knowledge of the gospel.

¹ Löning, p. 22; *Expositor*, Feb. 1887; Gore, *Church and Ministry*, Note K.

Paul in addressing the elders of Ephesus, who had come down to meet him at Miletus, adds: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops."¹ The best rendering in this passage is that of Hort, who sees as yet no official significance in the word, which is employed in an adjectival sense, "in which the Holy Ghost set you to have oversight." The other reference outside the Pastorals is in the address to the Philippians, "with the bishops and deacons."² Here also the apostle is not addressing two classes of officers, but is appealing to those who exercise the general functions of oversight and service.

Now, if the offices of elder and bishop had been distinct from the first, we should not expect so marked a silence upon the activity of the class of bishop. If elders possessed peculiar functions, we must believe either that Paul's address to the Philippians omitted the office of elder, or that the church in Philippi was defective in not having elders.

Timothy³ makes little mention of elders, but refers to bishops at Ephesus, although we have seen that Ephesus had its presbyterian council; while Titus⁴ omits the name bishop, and refers to

¹ Acts xx, 28. ² Phil. i, 1. ³ 1 Tim. iii, ⁴ Tit. i. 5 ff.

the officers at Crete as elders. This seems to point to the equivalence of the words, especially in the letter to Titus, who is instructed to ordain elders, and then told what the qualities of a bishop are. Thereby the terms are proved to be synonymous.

But in addition to this, there are not the differences of function, which the theory presupposes. This elaborate organisation, which assigns discipline to the elder and administration to the bishop, is not in accordance with the simplicity of the early Church. That financial duties belong to the elders is apparent in the way in which collections are sent to them at Jerusalem.¹ The elders are also associated with the apostles in deciding upon questions of doctrine,² while they have the right to lay hands on certain persons who will guard the correct transmission of truth. Paul also recommends the elders who take part in teaching as worthy of double honour.³ James⁴ assigns to elders the function of tending the sick, which, according to the above theory, should be exclusively in the hands of the bishop. Thus elders perform, it seems, *all* the duties of the community. On the other hand, the bishop's activity is not confined to finance, as Harnack claims, for the qualifications of the bishop are of

¹ Acts xi. 30. ² Acts xv. ³ 1 Tim. v. 17. ⁴ Jas. v. 14.

such a nature that they show him to be intrusted with the exercise of discipline.¹ The bishop has also to be a teacher. He must be able both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.² A bishop must be "apt to teach."³ These facts suffice to prove the practical equivalence of the words bishop and elder as against the theory which upholds the duality of officers. In the Christian communities the elder-bishops were the leaders, and along with the deacons were responsible for teaching, discipline, and spiritual oversight.

In Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* Gwatkin writes, "The general equivalence of the two offices in the apostolic age seems undeniable"; while Loofs of Halle says that there was originally no official distinction between presbyter and bishop, and considers the attempt to build diverse orders of Church officers in the first century upon differences of functions or gifts, as complicated and misleading. Zahn joins hands with him here, asserting in his recent *Introduction to the New Testament* that "no art of exegesis can darken the fact that in Tit. i. 5 and 9 the identity of bishop and elder is presupposed as self-evident." If it be asked why the two words were in use for the same office, there may be a sufficient answer in the suggestion of

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 5.

² Tit. i. 9.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 2.

Sanday, that the word *ἐπίσκοπος* had a similar history to *διάκονος*, being employed at first in a general way for the task of oversight. Coming first into use as an adjective to qualify the noun elder, it by degrees assumed an official signification.

Thus we seem to be justified in returning practically to the main conclusion of Lightfoot, that the two words are used interchangeably for the same person. But the gain of this conflict in scholarship is the presumption that the terms though applying to the same person, are not altogether equivalent, since elder originally indicated the office, and bishop the function of oversight attached to the office.

Two questions remain for treatment in connection with these letters. I. Were Timothy and Titus the prototypes of the monarchical bishop? When the High Anglican admitted the identity of bishop and elder, the defence of the divine right of Episcopacy had to be shifted, and the effort was made to derive the office of Timothy and Titus from the *apostolate*. The threefold ministry thus becomes apostolate, elder-bishop, and deacon, the apostle being the forerunner of the bishop. These apostolic delegates are represented as the "tentative beginnings for the maintenance of apostolic government, through men who governed as apos-

tolic deputies, because apostles themselves were out of reach." Hence the gradation Apostolate, Presbyterate, Diaconate. In the words of Moberly, "If it might be thought an exaggeration to say that the Church without the apostolate would be inconceivable, at all events it is true to say that from the Church as it is sketched in fact, the apostolate is altogether inseparable." . . . "By degrees something came in which, as apostolate faded gradually away, might not improperly perpetuate in the Catholic Church whatever was capable of being perpetuated of that apostolic background."

Two features are said to bring their office into direct comparison and antithesis with that of the ordinary elder: (1) the exercise of jurisdiction over all the grades of Christian ministry, and (2) the responsibility of appointing, and the power of constituting fit persons for each of the several offices, usually by the method of ordination.¹

In proceeding to consider the claims of these defenders of Episcopacy, we would note that the name given to Timothy signifies a non-local office. "Suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist,

¹ Weizsäcker discovers in these two delegates the trend towards monarchical Episcopacy, whereas Pfeleiderer and others treat the office as analogous to the Archbishop or Metropolitan.

fulfil thy ministry.”¹ This office of evangelist excludes the idea of a fixed abode; as also does the movement of these workers from place to place. According to the second letter, Timothy is to leave the city of Ephesus, where he is to be replaced by Tychicus. Also the latest word from Titus is when he is in Dalmatia, having left Crete. A permanent control over the churches is therefore not implied in these epistles, which are letters of recall. The offices were temporary, and can be explained by the need of strong leadership. These scattered congregations of Crete and of Ephesus required the superintendence of such men, until the elders had gained effective influence. Paul decided, since he could not go himself, to send an experienced man to oversee; but not with any idea of constituting such an office as *vicarius apostolicus*. The work of Timothy at Ephesus was that of the evangelist. He was to instruct; “Till I come, give attention to reading (in Church service), to exhortation, to teaching.”

The contention that these men had the prerogative of ordaining the elders to this office, rests upon an incorrect exegesis: for when we read that Titus was left in Crete to appoint officers,² the word (*καθίστημι*) is the same as that used in the election of

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

² Tit. i. 5.

the Seven,¹ where the people made the choice. The other passage brought forward in defence of this theory, "Lay hands hastily on no man,"² applies not to the ordination of elders, but most probably to the restoration of the lapsed, who had fallen from grace and were now penitent. The following quotation from Zahn brings out very clearly the issue: "The situation of Timothy at Ephesus could only be called episcopal by means of a gross offence against history. For the episcopal office only existed where the one bishop presiding over the Presbytery represented the head of the Church life of the community, an office associated for the lifetime of the holder within one place and confined to it. But the position of Timothy at the head of the communities of Asia was the result of his position as missionary aid to Paul. It was a part of the apostolic calling in so far as this concerned the guidance of the community. This gave Timothy no nearer relation to one single community in contradistinction from all other communities in the province, and it changed in no way the organisation of the single congregation. Indeed the tradition of Timothy's episcopate at Ephesus is as late as the time of Eusebius."³

¹ Acts vi.

² 1 Tim. v. 22.

³ Zahn, *Einleitung in d. N.T.* i. 421.

2. The remaining question of the Pastorals that merits an answer is, How much did ordination mean? There are two passages in the letters that are appealed to in this connection: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,"¹ and "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands."² The sacerdotal explanation is that ordination conferred a gift or charisma, which differentiated the ordained person from all others.

The first passage, accordingly, is explained by this school as the ordination of Timothy to the function of apostolic delegate, whereby he obtained the charisma of office. However, another explanation is to be preferred. When Paul reminds Timothy not to neglect the gift which is in him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of presbyters, he is recalling the memory of Timothy to the time when he was chosen to go out on the second missionary journey with himself. The choice of the youthful workman did not issue in the bestowal of a charisma, but was the result of his having had the charisma. Suitability for office was the cause of Timothy's choice, as is apparent

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

² 2 Tim. i. 6.

from an earlier passage, "This charge I commit to thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee."¹ The apostle goes back to the time when prophetic voices gave him the impulse to select Timothy as a companion; and the hands were laid on him as a method of devoting him to the work. Thus the gift was given "through (*διὰ*) prophecy," and the accompanying external act was ordination, "with (*μετά*) the laying on of hands." Paul bids the youth remember this gift which he possessed. The gift was the capacity or function which was in Timothy by the special providence of God, which itself was a proof of fitness, the charisma being a qualification that preceded ordination and justified it.

This casts light on the other passage, where Paul advises Timothy to "stir up," or fan into a flame, the gift which was in him by the laying on of his hands, where charisma cannot mean official administration over Ephesus, since his stay there is all but ended. It must be spiritual ability, for the word "stir up" would be strange if applied to official capacity. "The antecedents of Timothy's *charisma* lay in the atmosphere of unfeigned faith." The gift, as the context shows, is associated, not with control or ability to ordain, but with the

¹ 1 Tim. i. 18.

simple duty of preaching the Word ; and ordination is the symbol of authentication of spiritual endowment for definite functions.

The laying on of the hands was parallel with the habit of Jewish Rabbis, who laid hands on their disciples : and when Timothy has the hands laid on him, it is the solemn act that acknowledges him in the eyes of the Church as fitted for this office. Ordination in the New Testament does not confer a grace : it is the recognition of a grace. To use the words of one to whom I am much indebted, "Jewish usage in the case of the Rabbis and their disciples renders it highly probable that laying on of hands was largely practised in the *ecclesiæ* of the apostolic age as a rite introductory to ecclesiastical office. But as the New Testament tells us no more than what has already been mentioned, it can hardly be likely that any essential principle was held to be involved in it. It was enough that an *ecclesia* should, in modern phrase, be organised, or in the really clearer apostolic phrase, be treated as a body made up with members with a diversity of functions, and that all things should be done decently and in order."¹

In conclusion, the aim of the apostle in writing these epistles was to emphasise the necessity of a

¹ Hort, *Ecclesia*, p. 216.

ministry duly appointed to be the bulwark of true doctrine and discipline. Timothy is to remain in Ephesus, that all may learn to avoid new-fangled teaching. The charismatic ministry of the early epistles is disappearing as the life of the Church cuts for itself deeper and more permanent channels. For our knowledge of the transition to a permanent and local ministry, we are partly indebted to the Pastorals: though here, as in the other letters, the forms of the ministry are assumed as existing rather than prescribed. We have seen that there is no parallel between the function of Timothy and Titus and that of the later bishop, and that the mechanical theory of ordination has no support in these letters, where the passages quoted refer to a former experience in the life of the evangelist. We misinterpret these letters by reading into them sacerdotal meaning, and we also do injustice to them by thinking that they refer only to the authority of the ministry. Far more than authority of office or ordination to Paul is the preaching of the true and faithful Word, which is able to heal the disordered world. "I charge thee, preach the word in season and out of season"; and most of all he fears lest his friends should fall, or fail of the glory of God. "Watch thou in all things; take thy share of hardship: make full proof of thy ministry."

In these letters, as in his other late epistles, Paul, while often returning to the thought of the Church and the ministry, makes no reference to the ministry as a sacrificing priesthood. If at times the symbolism of sacrifice is employed, this should cause no astonishment in one whose whole life was passed under the shadow of priestly customs; but it is all the more remarkable that he refrains from ascribing to himself or his aids the chief function of priesthood, namely, ritual sacrifice. The only sacrifice is the proclamation of the truth, and the offering of a spiritual sacrifice of love and self-denial. But these are in no way substitutes for the one sacrifice of Christ, which could never be repeated. "The preaching of the gospel he calls a sacrificial work, and genuine faith an acceptable offering." How Paul offered the gift of self-sacrificing love and obedience is the admiration of the world, for he counted all things but loss for the sake of the gospel. His sufferings were his joy, and he went so far as to be ready to be himself anathema, if thereby Israel could be saved.

With this ideal of self-denying service, it is small wonder that the apostle insisted upon the pastoral aspect of the ministry, as when he urged it upon the elders of Ephesus that they take heed to the flock over which they had been placed, which

Christ had purchased with His own precious blood. But to find in such fervent addresses an emphatic and definite exhortation to perform the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as the culminating element in the office of oversight, is to dally with the large mind and spiritual earnestness of the apostle. The ministry is self-sacrificing, never sacerdotal.

In any survey of the constitution of the apostolic Church there is a place for the Epistle to the *Hebrews* by the great unknown author, whether apostle or prophet or teacher. For though there is little direct certitude to be gleaned as to the organisation itself, the whole theme of the letter gives clear utterance to the apostolic temper concerning sacerdotalism. This Church, wherever it had its home, probably in Palestine, had been evangelised by personal disciples of the Lord, whose word was guaranteed by special manifestations of the Divine Spirit;¹ and varying fortunes of adversity seem to have put a severe strain on their faith. But on the whole their faith had kept firmly anchored to the unseen realities, and the Church abode as a centre of Christian hospitality and brotherly love.² Those in authority over them as a local ministry are called "leaders," men, it

¹ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

² Heb. vi. 9, 10, xii. 1, 2.

would seem, who retained their position because by them first the gospel had been preached in this community. Hebrews affords proof positive that, in these congregations at least, leadership was not based on financial, but on spiritual qualification—"Obey your leaders, and be in subjection to them; for it is they who watch sleeplessly for your souls, as those who have to give an account, in order that they may do this with joy and not with grief"; the figure apparently being that these leaders are under-shepherds to the great Overseer and Bishop of souls.¹ The general similarities of thought and expression between Hebrews and 1 Peter are so conspicuous, that it is perhaps legitimate to infer that the leaders of Hebrews are parallel to the elders of 1 Pet. v. 1.

The anonymity of the Epistle is a sure evidence that its authority is not drawn from any extrinsic circumstance, for there is no hint in the letter that an apostle of the Lord is speaking. Unquestionably the author claims the right to speak in the name of the Lord, and warns the readers against foreign and strangely-assorted doctrines of other teachers who apparently had slipped into the Church;² but the only antidote is the pure

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

² Heb. xiii. 9.

Word of God, in which their own well-known leaders had instructed them.¹ It seems probable that a still active prophecy was affording opportunity for the introduction of false teaching, and may have fostered some insubordination towards old teachers, on the part of members of the Church, who may have claimed an equal right to speak under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The author meets this, not by insisting on the official status of the original teacher, but by an exposition of the gospel truth, and by bidding them remember that this is what has been taught from the beginning, and is still being taught.

The letter is an epistle of exhortation to remind them of the import of their Christian confession, that Jesus is the Messiah. As such He is the High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. His life was an initiation into His vocation; and His death, instead of being a humiliation beyond what was becoming to the Messiah, was the supreme high-priestly act through which He has entered once for all into the very presence of the Most High, to make purification for sins. Stripped of gorgeous ceremonial, void of smoking altars, deprived of the presence of a visible priest, the Christian life and worship, bald and bare in

¹ Heb. iv. 12, xiii. 7.

external ritual, seemed to these Hebrews to be a poor substitute for all the pomp and circumstance of the Jewish ordinal, wearing the prestige of divine institution and of hoary age. But with a bold, direct, consummate argument the author faces these most perplexing difficulties; and hard though it may be for his readers, he leaves not a vestige of material sacrifice or earthly priest in the New Covenant, that has been inaugurated once for all by the final and sufficient sacrifice of Messiah. The old is becoming grey with years, and has one foot in the tomb:¹—a strange prophecy, which has been wonderfully falsified by history, if the Roman and Greek system of priest and mass are allowed to be the truest form of historical Christianity!

None who studies Hebrews can find in it any support for regarding the minister of the New Testament as a priest. This was precisely what these Hebrews wished their minister to be; and in spite of this letter, possibly not this church, but other feebly-instructed Christians, clung tenaciously to their old covenant rites, and by degrees had them perpetuated with more or less exact repetition in the worship of the Christian Church. Not the Christianity of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but the weeds of a stubborn Judaism that the

¹ Heb. viii. 13.

author did his best to uproot, were the source of the priesthood and the sacrificing minister, which has spread so widely and corrupted so much of the good soil of the Church. "Forget not to do good and to share fellowship: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."¹

Earthly priesthood is so dependent on the outward and accidental, hereditary descent and certain external qualifications, that if Jesus had to exercise His priesthood on earth, He would not have been even a priest, much less a high priest.² Christ stands alone, except that Melchizedek is a remote and distant shadow in the dim past of that supreme priesthood which depends for its validity only on personal and inherent worth. The old priest according to descent and with outward institution, has disappeared for ever, and Christ is left as the High Priest in the presence of God. After the Christ — the king-priest — it is simply usurpation for anyone to attempt to revive the functions of earthly priesthood, or sacrifices upon a consecrated altar.³

¹ Heb. xiii. 15.

² Heb. viii. 4.

³ Heb. vii. 11-19.

CHAPTER V

THE PALESTINIAN CHURCH

WE shall now trace the course of organisation in the different branches of the early Church up to the first quarter of the second century, and seek to find the sources whence flowed the episcopate. There were three spheres of influence in the early Church during the latter half of the first and the beginning of the second century: 1. The East or Palestinian, with the important churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, and places to the further East; 2. Asia Minor, with its curiosities of literary and religious growth, comprising such churches as the famed seven of the Apocalypse and others; 3. The West, which is all but synonymous with Rome. The problem that interests the student of organisation is, which of these sections of the Church is responsible for the origin and development of the single bishop; for theories have been formulated which have

sought to claim the honour for each of the three. We are thus furnished with a division for the next three chapters.

After the close of the New Testament books, ecclesiastical history passes into a partial eclipse.¹ On board Paul's vessel neither sun nor moon nor stars appeared for many days; so for the historian of this period there are few guiding marks, and he must rely upon dead reckoning. If the Middle Ages are dark because of the absence of intelligence, there is another dark age at the close of the first century, dark to us, because of our want of knowledge. There are a few fragments dating from the period, which bridge the gap and put us in touch with that early age; and ever and anon the traveller to some Eastern monastery seeks to practise strategy on the crude monk, and rob him of his valuable document, knowing his little *ruse* will be pardoned him, as it is in the interest of science. But the discoveries thus far have not sufficed to give clear knowledge on this dark time. It was an age, also, which was peculiarly fertile; a time of beginnings, when things developed apace, like the rushing growth of our spring-time in Canada. Many of the important ecclesiastical institutions had their birth in this period. We

¹ Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, i. 285.

watch them pass into the dark zone unformulated, but come out quite developed; while we are left in comparative ignorance concerning the process which caused the change. Entering molten, they issue cast. Hence the opportunity for the generous play of theory. That dark age is a perfect bonanza to the ambitious Church historian, who has any eager zest for the possession of some private theory of his own.

As might be readily supposed, the church of Jerusalem had a very prominent position, owing to its being the centre of Judaism, whose connection with Christianity was quite intimate during several decades after the death of Jesus. For many years there were relations of comparative friendliness between the Christians and the Jews; and during the period between the death of the elder James and the turmoil that ensued on the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus, there is little evidence of Christians having been persecuted in the city.¹ The social position of the Jerusalem Christians does not seem to have been that of comfortable livelihood, since the other communities were canvassed for collections on behalf of its poor saints; but a degree of prestige must have attached to this as the original Church, the place of Christ's death, and

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, ii. chap. i.

the home of the apostolic band. Hopes that the new movement might retain Jerusalem as its permanent centre, may have long continued in the minds of the Christians of Palestine; and it was only by the desolating shock of ruin, which came to the city in 70 A.D. that the remaining expectations of a union between the Jew and the Christian were shattered. The national ideal was abandoned by the Jewish-Christian Church when, as exiles from Jerusalem, they formed their new community in the Decapolis at Pella. Judaism and Jewish Christianity were for ever divorced.¹

From this time the Palestinian Church is plunged into obscurity, and for sixty years following its destruction, Jerusalem yields no record to the historian.² The writings of the early Christian Fathers make few references to the post-apostolic history of these places, and the natural inference is that Christianity ceased to have much hold; while the linguistic discoveries of to-day leave the impression that Palestine, losing its early Christianity, was reclaimed afterwards by Gentile efforts. "The Palestinian Christians of later times were not descendants of the apostolic Church, but simply converts won over from Judaism or Paganism

¹ Réville, *L'Épiscopat*, p. 222.

² Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Jerusalem."

by Greek-speaking or Syriac-speaking missionaries."¹

Keeping in mind the comparative unimportance of the Palestinian Churches after the fall of Jerusalem, we shall not expect many far-reaching movements to emanate from this quarter. The East did not have a leading position in the development of the early episcopate. As to the extent of its influence, however, there is not perfect agreement. The title of bishop is claimed for James. Gore discovers in his office the first link of Episcopacy;² and Lightfoot writes: "James, the Lord's brother alone, within the period compassed by apostolic writings, can claim to be regarded as a bishop in the later and more special sense of the term."³ This is said to be confirmed by the unanimous evidence of writers after 150 A.D., all of whom refer to James as the first bishop of Jerusalem,⁴ Clement of Alexandria saying that Peter and James and John elected James the Just bishop of Jerusalem.

All the evidence of the sources goes to show the outstanding position held by James among the

¹ *Critical Review*, April 1899, p. 146.

² Gore, *The Church and Ministry*, p. 273.

³ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 197.

⁴ "Hegesippus does not give James the title of bishop" (Löning, p. 108).

apostles. When Peter was released, he asked that word be taken to James.¹ James, if he did not preside at the council of Jerusalem,² was the one whose opinion was listened to with greatest deference.³ When Paul made his visit to Jerusalem, he went to meet James.⁴ These passages suffice to assure us that in this man, the brother of the Lord, we have one of the striking personalities of the Church. So familiar was he to the communities, that though several others bore the same title, yet when the name James was employed he was always understood to be referred to.

But it is to be noticed that James is nowhere called bishop in the New Testament; and the theory which identifies him with the modern bishop leaves out of account many striking differences. There are personal reasons, as we shall see, to explain his pre-eminence. Nor is this pre-eminence absolute. He is surrounded by the elders of the city church, and delivers his decision as if it were to be received for its own value, and not as an autocratic utterance. Any assumption of control over the other churches is quite

¹ Acts xii. 17.

² "There is nothing in St. Luke's words which bears out what is often said, that St. James presided over the conference at Jerusalem" (Hort).

³ Acts xv. 13 ff.

⁴ Acts xxi. 18.

absent. The position of James was in all probability that of local leader of the church at Jerusalem. In this the germs of the monarchical principle of government are making their appearance; and the Church is discovering that it is a most beneficial expedient in this particular case to choose some one of their number as a permanent chairman and representative of the community. But the choice was extraordinary, and did not involve any new departure on the part of the apostles, as if they had now decided to institute the episcopal form of organisation. That the Church did not regard this as a definite policy, whereby a universal model was established, is apparent from two facts: (1) absence of reference to it in the early Palestinian writings; (2) the position of James as based on personal qualification.

(1.) The Palestinian documents have no reference to it.

The Epistle of James is the first purely Palestinian document, and many date it about the middle of the first century, as the earliest portion of the New Testament.¹ It is, with its energy of moral life and its assurance that persistent endurance will not fail of its reward, to some extent an echo of the Hebrew Psalmists. But the morality

¹ Mayor and Zahn.

of James is that of the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus ; and no letter so recalls the definite language of Jesus as does this, which Luther unfortunately called a letter of straw. The readers are formed into small organisations, resembling very much the Jewish synagogue: for the word synagogue is apparently used in the epistle to represent the meeting-place of Christians. But in the churches addressed there is no evidence of episcopal supremacy. Not only is the name wanting, but all hints of such ecclesiastical government are absent. The institutions are still free, although we find evidence of the transition into local organisations.

There are two separate classes of officers mentioned. (a) The *Teacher*: "Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment."¹ The author does not wish to depreciate the office, as some critics maintain who, in their anxiety to assign a late date to the epistle, represent the author as living in a time when the office of teacher is falling into disrepute. In James the office of teacher was at most only on the way to become technical. Soon the multiplication of converts was to render necessary the establishment of a class who possessed the special gift of teaching, that is, the

¹ Jas. iii. 1.

power of clearly understanding and imparting the principles of the Christian religion. These were not, like the apostles and prophets, guided by direct revelation, but formed a third order, to which they were appointed, not by any authority other than their own voluntary choice. The danger of a comparatively irresponsible form of teaching is already felt by our author. He, who of all others believed most sincerely in the efficacy of silence, being the New Testament specialist on the tongue, sees in this liberty of utterance the door by which perils may creep into the Church, and he is anxious to lead in the direction of an authorised class of teachers.

(b) There is also the *Presbyter* or *Elder*. Some are distinctly called elders of the *Ecclesia*, representatives, no doubt, of an order taken from the constitution of the Palestinian synagogue. No account is given of their appointment, but their functions are once referred to, "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick."¹ The presbyters exercise the cure of souls. They are to console and edify the sick and the weak. As men of faith they

¹ Jas. v. 14.

are called upon to anoint in the name of Christ, and their work will be the result of their faith. The elder was thus one of the spiritual nobility of the Church, but as yet had no privilege of office. Ordination and episcopal sanction are quite out of the question. Confession is recommended ; but not to the priest. "Confess your faults one to another." Prayer is for the individual : and there is no special value in the prayers of the presbyter, *quâ* presbyter, but the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The reference to the prayer of the presbyter or elder is of interest, because it shows how, by the force of events, certain services which all could render are especially expected of the elders, who by reason of their individual distinction are more capable. With time an increment of dignity will come to the presbyter ; then the day will dawn when he will be the priest, and, not because of special faith but of function, will be invested with the reverence of a privileged order, as one who can present prayers and expect an answer in virtue of the office he holds. The dignity which at first attached to the character of the elder will be transferred to the office. He will be no longer a presbyter, but a priest. But there is no sign of this in the Epistle of *James*, nor is there any verse that presupposes the existence of an

episcopal form of government. With James as the author of the epistle the omission is very eloquent. James himself is apparently indifferent to the presence of a single bishop in each local centre of the Church of the Dispersion. The letter displays a marked tendency to claim for the Church indiscriminate freedom of speech and legislation. The elders thus far are purely representative, and do in the name of the Church what is beyond the range of the whole body to do. "They are the vehicles of the sympathy of the whole brotherhood." Elders are the rulers of the Palestinian Church.

The second document to which we look for information concerning the Eastern Church is the *Didaché*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which was discovered in 1873 by Bryennios, Patriarch of Nicomedia. It consists of sixteen chapters. The first six are a simple exposition of "the two ways," the way of life and the way of death: the four following sections are concerned with the correct method of celebrating the Christian feasts, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: from the eleventh chapter to the end there are important references to the ministry of the Church, which are very valuable for the subject in hand. This part of the *Didaché* is a source of the first rank for the history

of the organisation of the early Church.¹ "Until the discovery of the *Didaché* there were certain phenomena of the apostolic age which hung, as it were, in the air. They were like threads cut off abruptly, of which we saw the beginning, but neither middle nor end. It is just these phenomena that the *Didaché* takes up, brings them to our sight, and connects them with the course of subsequent history."²

The work, while in its present form a unity, gives evidence of being composite; and attempts have been made to define the sources. Some hold that it is the outgrowth of a work called the Two Ways, which was a Jewish product prepared for proselytes and based upon the Decalogue; and that it was afterwards taken as a useful guide-book or manual for Christian catechumens. No very precise indication is given as to its origin, but an Oriental source is indicated. Opinions have been divided between Egypt and Syria. Harnack claims the former as its home; but the weight of English authority, in which Réville joins, leans to a Palestinian origin. There is little evidence of Gnosticism, and the simple spirit seen in the Epistle of James breathes through its pages. No Hellenic

¹ *Realencyklopädie*, 3rd edition, art. "Apostellehre."

² Sanday, *Expositor*, Feb. 1887.

elements come to the front, and doctrinal standards are quite absent. The simple law of the gospel is told ; but the profounder themes of the glorified Saviour, the Atonement, and other verities of the new kingdom, are wanting. There are references to the feeding of the people on the hillside, and other local notes that are not accordant with an Egyptian origin. However, as Harnack says, the author belongs to the universal Church, and his information is not sectional.

We assume that the *Didaché* is the first and oldest specimen of a literature destined afterwards to become very common, when the Apostolic Canons and Constitutions attained a considerable measure of popularity. It is a manual of primitive instruction, or a book of discipline,¹ and has been subjected to a number of redactions, the foundation being Jewish. The type of its organisation and its insistence on hospitality, both leave the impression of great antiquity, and there is little risk in putting it down somewhere about 100 A.D.

There are two functions or phases of ministry in the *Didaché*. (a) *General*. The spiritual direction still remains in the hands of the apostles and prophets. The apostle and prophet are the most important leaders of Church life, and are itinerant.

¹ Schaff, *Oldest Church Manual*.

The *apostle*, of course, is not one of the Twelve ; and we may run a close analogy between him and the evangelist, his work being to make known the words of the Saviour, and to act as a medium for transmitting the teaching of Christ. Apostles were the preachers of the age, and in their work made use of the words of Jesus. Their practice, combined with the evidence furnished by our Gospels, shows that the sayings of Christ commanded the greatest reverence. However, the *Didaché* represents the apostolate as beginning to lose some of its prestige, since it required to furnish testimonials of validity. Indeed, the Church had from its inception to fortify itself against imposture. Freedom of speech and the charismatic ministry, by which anyone might be a source of inspiration, made it easy for those so inclined to play the hypocrite and take advantage of the simplicity of the elect. The first test of apostleship is found in character. The apostle shall remain one day, and if necessary a second ; but if he prolong his stay for three days he is a false prophet, the term false apostle not being found in the *Didaché*. He is to take nothing but bread, and if he ask for gold is a false prophet. The second test was the persuasiveness of the truth he spoke, which, if contrary to the universal doctrine,

proved him false. It then became the duty of the people to cast him aside. "Who cometh to you and teacheth that which has been said before, listen to him: but if the teacher is perverse and utters a different doctrine, do not pay heed to him." Thus severely does it deprecate false doctrines.

The *prophet* occupies a special place in the *Didaché*. He is the organ of divine revelation, is divinely inspired, and is accordingly held in much esteem by the people. "Every prophet who speaks in the spirit is not to be judged of you." Greater freedom is permitted to him, and the ordinary services of the Church are not put upon him as a constraint. He is to be listened to with reverent attention. He can take part in the communion services as he deems best. He may offer extempore prayer; whereas there is a liturgical form for the Eucharist which all others must observe. But here again arose the unfortunate contingency of deceitfulness, as all prophets were not true; and the same criterion that was used with the apostle had to be put into exercise to distinguish the true prophet from the false. "Not everyone that speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only when he follows the conduct of the Lord. Every prophet who speaks the truth and fails to

live it out is false. If he wishes to eat of the table, and if he says in the spirit, Give me money or anything like that, ye shall not give it him." The apostle could not take up his abode in a congregation, but exercised a peripatetic ministry, whose time limit in any one place was three days. However, under certain circumstances the prophet might assume charge over a local church, in which case these resident prophets were to receive the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oxen. "Every prophet who stays with you is worthy of his support."

Plainly, then, there was, in the time when the *Didaché* was written, a wide activity in the general brotherhood; fraternal greetings would often be interchanged, and these travelling ministers would act as agents for fostering the spirit of unity, making all the communities to understand that they were members of the same fold. The duties of apostle and prophet in the *Didaché* thus shed bright light upon the use of the words in Acts and in the Pauline Epistles. But the language also shows that the older non-local ministry was passing away as a thing whose era was outgrown, and that the apostolate, so far from being essential to the nature of the Christian Church, was only as a foundation to prepare for the building of the

edifice. The great value of the *Didaché* is that it makes this evident. It reveals a transition period, and the departure of the peripatetic age. The abuses of the travelling system had increased, and the impossibility of its continuance was becoming manifest. Just as in merchandise and music the wandering Jew and the wandering minstrel gave place to a stationary class, so the need of settlement became more and more apparent in the Church; and the local ministry, while not yet on a level with the ministry of apostles and prophets, is gaining prestige. The community is, indeed, still sovereign. "Inspiration is still recognised as the fountainhead of truth, as in all the primitive communities; and inspiration is not transmitted hierarchically, but directly from above." There is no administrative authority residing in an elected band of rulers; but the need of order and the danger of anarchy, the most hostile foe that any Church or nation can encounter, were rendering necessitous some strong local government.

(b) *Local ministry.* *Bishops* and *deacons* are mentioned in the *Didaché*, "Choose now for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, humble and not greedy of gold, truthful and tried men; for these perform for you the services of the prophets and teachers. Do not despise them, since

they are the honourable men in your midst along with the prophets and teachers." From the position of this chapter it is clear that the author is turning from the duties of the Church at large with its apostles, to the local community, so that the bishops and deacons are the local ministry. From the moral qualities that are demanded of them we can form some idea of their functions. They are to exercise the administrative work of the congregation, taking charge of the general management of affairs; and the words "they perform for you the services of the prophets," reflect light upon the time when these local rulers were also beginning to undertake the duties which thus far were performed by the travelling ministry, such as teaching, the dispensing of the Eucharist and Baptism, and in general the spiritual oversight. The work of apostle and prophet is passing into the hands of bishop and deacon.

The question at once arises, Who are these bishops? Are they the same as the elders of the letter of James, of which word there is no mention in the *Didaché*? The simplest supposition is that they are identical, and that the word bishop in the *Didaché* takes the place of the word elder in the Epistle. But yet this is denied by many; as by Réville, who says that however seductive the identi-

fication may appear, "the presbyters of the Epistle of James do not exercise the same function as the bishops of the *Didaché*." He holds that there were, though unmentioned, elders in the Church who directed the spiritual affairs, the notables of the faith; while the administrative functions of the bishop were distinct. This is all in the interest of his theory of the fundamental and original distinction between bishop and elder. But as this is of the nature of assumption, I see no reason for reversing the opinion expressed in former pages, that bishop simply takes the place of elder. "The Bishops of the *Didaché* are identical with the Presbyters: hence the latter are not mentioned at all."¹

Thus, then, the *Didaché* is an early witness to the absorption of the spiritual functions by local Church officials. The superiority of prophecy is in word maintained, the charismatic gifts are recognised, and there is no trace of Catholicism. The only unity which the writer knows is that of a spiritual and mystical nature. There is no formal test of Church membership or authority. Visitors are not asked as yet for credential letters of Church standing, but are welcomed because of their simple confession of faith. The official has not yet replaced the spiritual. Later ecclesiasticism is

¹ Schaff, p. 73.

absent. The true organs of unity are the apostles and prophets, who go from place to place as the witnesses of a common faith: and though precautions are taken against the abuse of their position, yet their inspiration is acknowledged. The sovereignty of the Spirit's guidance appeals to the heart of the community. However, the local ministry is finding its place, and though not yet nominally, has virtually become the chief force, and is tending to absorb the functions which formerly belonged to apostle and prophet. Bishop and deacon are winning a "local habitation and a name." There are the first signs of a dignity which is soon to eclipse that of the prophet, for in one section the community is advised to place the bishop among the "men to be honoured."

Those who accept the doctrine of a fundamental and original distinction between ministry and laity, and in general hold to the theory of apostolic succession, are inclined to cast aspersions on this little book, speaking of it as a mere Jewish manual Christianised, with no high authority, presenting a picture local, and in some respects incorrect. Moberly says of it that it is "in no case a particularly intelligent or authoritative interpreter of the ecclesiastical phenomena it reflects."¹

¹ Moberly, p. 178.

However, accepting the evidence in so far as it is complementary and not antagonistic to the traditions of the New Testament, we draw these conclusions—

1. Inspiration and not ordination qualifies for the highest ministry, and is the source of authority. There is no mention of any hierarchical transmission, or Church order which confers spiritual gifts.

2. The apostolate begins to lose pre-eminence. There is no likeness between the apostle of the *Didaché* and the later bishop; nor is the apostolate an indispensable background, as in the early years of the Church. The apostolate is rapidly disappearing in a cloud of illusory vagueness. The ideal of later Catholicism is indeed a far-away melody. Prophetism should be spoken of as the background of the *Didaché* rather than the apostolate: and prophecy is free as the wind. "Any election of the prophet is as impossible as the election of genius, for ordinarily the prophet was neither appointed nor ordained to office, but the bearer of a revelation of which he is subjectively conscious."¹

3. There is no monarchical episcopate. James, *e.g.*, is not known as the bishop to whom all can appeal.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*.

(2.) The second evidence, that the position of James was exceptional, is drawn from the fact that his influence was due to personal reasons which rendered his appointment extraordinary. For our information we turn to the record of Hegesippus, as it comes to us through the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. The historical value of Hegesippus has been often questioned, and is to the present day. Sabatier, *e.g.*, claims that his story of the Palestinian church, and more especially of James, its first bishop, is of no worth. "What is there," he asks, "in this tradition or legend but a purely ideal portrait?"¹ However, the present-day trend is to allow more credence to the words of Hegesippus. Réville says that so far from the picture of the Apostle James being fantastic, it reproduces a tradition which is already present in the Acts of the Apostles. Lightfoot also throws the weight of his name on the same side; and Löning is at great pains to defend his credibility, finding in him the strongest support for the thesis which he advocates, that the monarchical episcopate arose in the Palestinian church.

Hegesippus lived in the middle of the second century, coming from the Orient as far as Rome. He was thus versed in the language and manners

¹ Sabatier, *The Apostle Paul*, p. 26.

of Syria ; and is one of the few authorities for the history of the apostolic age, having composed his *Hypomnemata* in five books between 173-190 A.D. Eusebius in speaking of ecclesiastical writers of this period says, " Among these Hegesippus holds a distinguished rank, many of whose writings we have already quoted, where we have given some things as he has delivered them from apostolic traditions."

Hegesippus relates in the fifth book of his commentaries that after the death of Jesus, the episcopal control was committed by the apostles to James, the brother of the Lord. James was his model of a Christian saint. He was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath (*i.e.* the Roman bath). He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees interceding for the forgiveness of the people ; so that his knees became as hard as a camel's in consequence of his habitual supplication before God. And, indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety he was called the Just and *Oblias*, which signifies protector of the people. At last he dies the martyr's death as a faithful

servant of Jesus Christ. Asked by the scribes and Pharisees to persuade the people against the Lord Jesus, he goes to the wing of the temple, and placed there by the scribes, is addressed, "O thou just man, whom we ought to believe, since the people are led astray after Jesus that was crucified, declare unto us which is the door to Jesus." And he answered with a loud voice, "Why do ye ask me respecting Jesus, the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens at the right hand of great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven." And they cried out, "Oh, Justus himself is deceived." And they began to stone him, as he did not die immediately when cast down; but turning round he knelt down and said, "I entreat thee, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus he suffered martyrdom.

The record represents the Christian Church as on terms of friendliness with the Jews, and without any definite organisation. But after the death of James and the outbreak of war in 66, the whole body of the Church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation given to men of approved piety before the war, removed from the city and dwelt at a certain town Pella beyond the Jordan; and from that place they spread through-

out the East until the reign of King Agrippa II., 101. Hence arose the need of organisation ; and as Hegesippus relates, the choice of the Christians in Pella fell on Symeon because of his blood relationship with the Lord. His words are, "But after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, Simeon the son of Cleopas, our Lord's uncle, was appointed bishop, whom all proposed, as the second cousin of the Lord."¹ Hegesippus also narrates events connected with the lives of others of our Lord's relations. "There were yet living of the family of our Lord, the grandchildren of Judas, called the brother of the Lord according to the flesh. They were taken before Domitian, who treated them as simpletons, and let them go. Thus delivered they ruled the Churches, both as witnesses and relations of the Lord." When peace was established they continued living even to the time of Trajan.²

Much of this is doubtless apocryphal, and many of the features of the picture of James are drawn from the Old Testament. The vows of the

¹ Löning calls attention to the fact that the title which is here chosen for the Church leader was common in that Eastern land. "In no place, in the Greek-Roman world, is the word *episkopos* found in the inscriptions as a title of office with such frequency as in the East Jordan land in the parts bordering on Syria" (p. 108).

² Euseb. iii. 20.

Nazarite, the customs of the Pharisees, the prerogatives of the priest, are all laid under contribution; and the ideality of the whole passage is very evident. The letter of James gives quite another picture than this highly-touched representation. It does not insist on legal sanctity, but on freedom, making the most liberal use of the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Hegesippus therefore is somewhat imaginative. None the less there is this element of truth in the passage, that the respect which was at first paid to Jesus was transferred to His relations; and the tie of kinship was the qualification for government. The relatives of the Lord continue to rule in accordance with the Oriental principle of family succession, so that the first succession in the Church was not apostolic, but rather Messianic, the blood relationship being regarded as of primary importance. Symeon, Judas, and John were the relatives of the Lord, and it is not at all unlikely that the custom arose of selecting Church rulers from those who were connected with Christ.¹ This hereditary principle of the Jerusalem church militates very seriously against the arguments of those who appeal in their defence of Episcopacy to

¹ In the third century the relatives of Jesus were called by title *desposunoi*; cf. Zahn, *Einleitung in das N. T.* i. 77.

the example of James. That his authority sprang from the tie of blood, suffices to show how extraordinary was his position; since such relatives could not be forthcoming for each of the large centres of ecclesiastical activity.

The results of our study in the organisation of the Syro-Palestinian churches may be summed up as follows:—

1. There is an order of presbyter-bishops in each community. The influence of this class increased as the century drew near its close, in response to the demand for an authorised teaching which made the non-local ministry less popular, and thus added strength to the resident leaders of the community.

2. The only hint of the monarchical bishop is in the Church at Jerusalem. However, the visit of individuals such as prophets, who for the time exercised superintendence, would familiarise the community with the idea of a single president. Also the necessity of strong leadership would tend to concentrate authority in one person; and by degrees the bishop would become not the successor, but, to use McGiffert's phrase, "the substitute of the prophet."

3. In Jerusalem the position of James was peculiar. He was leader, but did not claim extensive jurisdiction, nor suggest the necessity of

similar government in other places. The office arose out of his personal qualities. "The blood relationship with Jesus became the test of the local Church, where there prevailed the recognised principle of government of the Church by the relatives of the Messiah according to the flesh, in expectation of His glorious return."

CHAPTER VI

ROME AND THE WEST

THE founding and organisation of the Church at Rome have attracted a large share of attention. Situated in the capital of the empire, it early assumed a position of outstanding importance. Of all churches this, more than any other, has caught the imagination of the world, and even to our own day the charm remains for many. Rome is, as Mazzini calls it, "The city of the soul." Into the throbbing vortex of this city all the empire poured its streams, each part contributing a share of its strength. Youths in their prime and their consciousness of some distinction of intellect; men with the zeal of new inventions; spendthrifts, who were on the search for novel excitements, having exhausted the limited resources of the provinces; upholders of some peculiar philosophy,—all such would naturally cast their eyes and trace their steps towards the "celestial city." There was

constant journeying to its gates, facilitated by the conditions of travelling, which "for ease, safety, and rapidity over the greater portion of the Roman Empire, were such as in part have only been reached again in Europe since the beginning of the present century."¹

What wonder if, with all this migration Rome-wards, and the struggle of life that abounded there, the desire so prevalent with others laid hold upon him who was peculiarly open to the influence of masterful ideals. What wonder that Paul began to say, "I also must see Rome." The note of universality had sounded loud in the ear of the apostle to the Gentiles; and imperialist charms must, at an early date, have swayed one whose sweep was so large. Seizing as he had done on the centres of Eastern influence with his strategic keenness of vision, he had fervently desired to be in the thick of work in this throbbing world in miniature. He had hoped to spread his gospel like a net over the provinces of the Roman Empire; and the task was to find its natural conclusion in the capital.² Long had the hope been present to his mind; and since his progress thither had been delayed, he wrote a letter to the

¹ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, xxvi.

² Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, ii. p. 72.

Romans, which for the first time brings the Church into the light of history.

The question of the origin of the Roman Church is a much debated one. The view concerning its first appearance most widely upheld is that of Ambrosiaster, who lived in the eleventh century. He does not trace back its history to an apostle, but thinks that it arose among the Jews of the city who had come from Jerusalem, where the knowledge of Christ had entered their hearts. Paul's letter does not appear to imply that the Church was founded by an apostle, as he had been careful to build on no other man's foundation. He wishes to share with them some spiritual gift, especially as he has heard of their growth in grace. We may suppose that he had many acquaintances among the converts, as the letter includes the names of those whose fellowship he had enjoyed on former occasions.¹ The household is more referred to in the Roman letter than elsewhere; and the heterogeneous nature of the Church is apparent. Perhaps the different classes of those who held the faith, scattered in groups throughout the city received organisation through the influence of Paul, who, with his magnetic power, would form one Church out of the several societies which until then existed.

¹ Rom. xvi.

The standing of the church seems to have been good from the first, the capital being doubtless more stable than the cities of Asia Minor, where, as we shall see, there was a fermentation of conflicting beliefs. The quality of membership at Rome must have been of a high grade, for the list includes some who belonged to the upper classes. The Epistle to the *Romans* is Paul's masterpiece; and the attention he expends on its form and style reveals the high estimate he must have had of the mental agility of his readers. Thus it seems that a church, and this a leading one, had been founded without the co-operation of an apostle.

But all this is resolutely denied by a large section of Christendom, who firmly believe that the church of Rome was founded by the Apostles Peter and Paul, and that Peter was its first bishop and first Pope, according to the promise of Christ, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." If anything can be decided by assertion, then this surely may claim credence. It is affirmed that when fourteen years had elapsed after the Ascension of Christ, the Apostle Peter went to Rome to form the church in that place; and from 200 A.D. onwards the belief was universal that Peter and Paul together founded this church, and were martyred there. Protestant writers delight

in showing the falsity of these statements. They contend that Peter had nothing whatever to do with the rise of the Roman church, and deny the twenty-five years' episcopate assigned to him. Some go so far as to say that he never came to Rome, but left it to the direction of the Apostle Paul, in accordance with the agreement that he would be the apostle to the Gentiles.

It is useless to discuss the legend of the episcopate of Peter at Rome, which arose from the statements of spurious Christian literature that Peter was bishop at Rome, and named Clement to succeed him in that see. This is impossible, for the simple reason that until the middle of the second century there was no monarchical episcopate in Rome. Then the witness of the Acts gives no support to the apostolate of Peter at Rome; and it certainly excludes his presence at Rome before Paul's. Besides, the First Epistle of Peter is ignorant of any episcopate except that of Christ. "But ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."¹ The organisation of the epistle is the simple one of elders who have the cure of souls, whose duties are of a humble nature. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed : feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”¹ The government of the Roman church, had Peter been there, would have been that of bishop-elders, for he knows of no other court of appeal than the elders. He likens himself, not to the *episkopos*, but the *presbuteros*, “Who am also an elder”; so that the presbyterial dignity is still dominant.

However, the question of the sojourn and death of the apostle in Rome is quite independent of his episcopate. He may have come to the city, and have died there, without having had any control over the church. This is a matter that may be left undecided in the present state of the evidence. Lipsius is a strong advocate of the negative side, whereas so sane and trustworthy a critic as Sanday says, “The visit of Peter to Rome, and his death there at some uncertain date, seem to us, if not removed beyond all possibility of doubt, yet as well established as many of the leading facts of history.”²

We leave, then, the apostolic writings without finding any signs of the episcopal government at Rome, and pass into the dark triad of decades

¹ 1 Pet. v. 1-3.

² *Romans*, xxxi.

closing the first century, where so many Church institutions took form. The first writing of the church of Rome to meet us as we pass out of this darkness is the Letter of *Clement*, afterwards called Bishop of Rome. Some identify this Clement with the person of similar name in Paul's letter to the Philippians; but the diversity of place, to say nothing of the time, renders this improbable. Others, without much success, seek to relate Clement and Clemens the consul, thus compensating the early Father with the honourable rank of consul, for the loss of the episcopal title of which modern investigation has deprived him. Concerning the man himself we know hardly anything, since he has managed to conceal his identity in the letter, and never once refers to himself, thereby making it the duty of contemporary history to give evidence of his authorship. Two manuscripts of the letter are extant. Codex Alexandrinus (A), containing most of the epistle, has been known for a long time; and in 1875 a second manuscript was discovered by Bryennios in Constantinople (C). A recently discovered Latin version (1894) seems to decide in favour of A as the more reliable manuscript.¹ The date is now generally placed at 95 A.D., in the reign of Domitian. The letter soon came to have

¹ *Realencyklopädie*, 3rd ed., art. "Clemens von Rom."

great authority, although for us its interest is chiefly historical. Clement's style is prolix; and though in many places it attains to considerable beauty, yet in its perusal we at once take note of the decline from the level of New Testament writings. His thought does not compare with Paul's for originality. His arguments are chiefly illustrative, drawn from the Old Testament, of which he makes abundant use; but the support which he finds for the resurrection of the dead from the legend of the Phoenix, shows the hold of secular and contemporary literature upon Christian writers.

In Corinth a great disorder had broken out. The factious spirit which existed in the time of Paul, when some followed Apollos, some Cephas, some Christ, was not extinct. Church disaffections often continue for several generations and die hard. They become a kind of church heirloom. The trouble in Corinth seems to have been some such heritage from the early days. This time it took the form of a cry of youth against age. Young men had, perhaps, grown weary of their older superiors, and with increasing independence chafed under the leadership of men, who they thought should be replaced.¹ The rising demand for more culture on

¹ The cause of the trouble is uncertain. Rothe says it was due to the introduction of the episcopal office. Another traces the con-

the part of the ministers was bearing heavily on the clergy. In a word, the church in its youthful section was tired of the ministry, and was eager for a change. They had actually gone so far as to force the resignation or deposition of the leaders. But this had been done at the expense of confusion and hardness of feeling in the community. To the church in Corinth in such a condition Clement undertakes to give advice in this epistle, whose opening sentences are as follows: "The Church of God which sojourns at Rome to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace unto you and peace from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied. Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to ourselves, we feel that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you consulted us; and especially to that shameful and detestable sedition, utterly abhorrent to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-confident persons have kindled to such a pitch of frenzy, that your venerable and illustrious name, worthy to be

fusion to the opposition between Gentile and Jewish Christianity, while a third suggests that the opponents of the elders were the charismatically gifted men.

universally loved, has suffered grievous injury." Then proceeding to magnify the part they had taken in former days, when they had enjoyed profound peace and an insatiable desire for doing good, he tells sadly of how emulation had entered, and strife, sedition, persecution, and disorder. "So the worthless rose up against the honoured, those of no reputation against such as were renowned, the foolish against the wise, the young against those advanced in years. For this reason righteousness and peace are now departed from among you, inasmuch as everyone abandons the fear of God and is become blind in His faith."

The language is all but that of authority. "But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of, as that the most steadfast and ancient church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters." Thus the first letter of Rome and the first instance of its interference with other churches, are closely associated with the promotion of peace, and the restoration of a divided and disorderly community. The following beautiful translation by Lightfoot

will show the intense love of order and quiet which Clement feels: "Let us note how free from anger God is towards His creatures. The heavens are moved by His direction, and obey Him in peace. Day and night accomplish the course assigned to them by Him, without hindrance one to another. Moreover, the inscrutable depths of the abysses and the unutterable statutes of the nether regions, are constrained by the same ordinances. The basin of the boundless sea, gathered together by His workmanship into its reservoirs, passeth not the barriers wherewith it is surrounded. The ocean which is impassable for men, and the worlds beyond it, are directed by the same ordinances of the Master. The seasons of spring and summer, and autumn and winter give way in succession one to another in peace. The winds in their several quarters at their proper seasons fulfil their ministry without disturbance. Yea, the smallest of living things come together in concord and peace. All these things the great Creator and Master of the universe ordered to be in peace and concord, doing good unto all things, but far beyond the rest unto us who have taken refuge in His compassionate mercies through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen."

But it is the organisation of the Church at Rome

and Corinth that more especially concerns us; and in the letter we observe, first, that in Corinth there is as yet no evidence of monarchical episcopacy, since bishop and elder are identical. "For our sin shall not be small, if we eject from the Episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those elders who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure."¹ The word bishop is evidently known, "And thus preaching through countries and cities, the apostles appointed the first-fruits of their labours, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe."²

From these passages we would gather that the term bishop had not yet attained a very definite official significance, and that the elders had the task of oversight. It is also to be noted that there is no mention of one bishop; and it is not conceivable that the name of him who held this office, if there were such in Corinth at the time, would be omitted from the address.

True, there is some mention of rulers who appear to be distinct from the elders, and Canon Gore finds in them testimony to the threefold ministry.³

¹ Chap. xlv.

² Chap. xlii.

³ *Church and Ministry*, p. 322.

But this reference is very obscure, and it is to be noted that there are several rulers, as if the church had no single overseer, while in addition the submission to the presbyters presupposes that they, and not these undefined rulers, are the chief authority. Réville, who wishes to run his distinction between government and teaching, appeals to this also, but admits that the separation is very indefinite. Therefore the absence of any mention of the monarchical bishop in Corinth, goes to prove that there is no such organisation in that church.

The Epistle of Polycarp, written to the Philippians shortly afterwards, makes no mention of the bishop of the church; and this is valuable as indirect evidence from a church not far distant from Corinth. It is not until the letters of Dionysius that we find the episcopate in its single form present in the church at Corinth. He was bishop of Corinth in 167 A.D. contemporaneously with Soter of Rome. It must have been between 100 and 160 A.D. that Greece adopted the episcopate.

Nor could monarchical Episcopacy have existed at Rome, as Clement's letter proves. Here is a church undertaking to write to another concerning a question of order, the ability to replace presbyters, and the conduct of the offices of government, and yet we do not find that the letter knows anything

about the bishop. Further, the author while advising a church that is confessedly without a bishop, and guided by presbyters, gives no word of warning that the episcopal should replace the presbyterian form. In a letter of sixty-five chapters, all of which are meant to strengthen the principle of unity and submission to Church authority, not one word is there on the monarchical episcopate which is said to be of divine origin. Surely the only conclusion from this silence is that as yet the episcopal government did not exist at Rome. This is an argument from silence; but in this case the silence is eloquent; for the whole letter deals with Church administration, and regards the authority of the laity as inferior to that of the clergy. Such an omission is inconceivable.

Our contention is further supported by the fact to be mentioned in the following lecture, that the Ignatian Epistle to the Romans differs from the others in the omission of the name of bishop, the explanation of which is that there was no bishop at Rome. It is only towards the end of the second century that lists of bishops of Rome appear; wherein the statement is made that Clement was the third bishop in order after Linus and Anenclitus. Thus Irenæus, "The blessed apostles Peter and Paul, having founded and built up the Church of

Rome, committed to Linus the office of the episcopate. This is the Linus of whom Paul makes mention in his letter to Timothy. To him succeeded Anenclitus. After him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric.”¹

These lists, however, reveal a bias, due to the eagerness of the next century to make a direct appeal to apostolic sources ; and as there are dissimilarities, it is difficult to make a selection between them. The evident artificiality and the manipulation of dates in these lists of bishops render them unworthy of historic support. Harnack, in his recent *Chronology* on Christian literature, speaks thus of the Roman lists: “For the six bishops, the list is untrustworthy, and the years of office of Telesphorus, Hyginus, and Pius are worthless. Anicetus is the first one whom we can with reason declare to be a monarchical bishop ; and we can by no means say when he entered upon his office (not before 155 A.D.).”

Thus, although it is difficult to unravel the early episcopate of the Roman church, it is evident that Episcopacy did not exist there at the end of the first century. That there may have been some

¹ Hippolytus, in his list, places Clement immediately after Linus and before Cletus.

leadership of the church is, of course, possible. The committee of presbyters would require a chairman, and it is very probable that Clement, because of his outstanding importance, may have been a permanent leader among them. The tradition of next century which ascribed the episcopate to Clement is quite intelligible, for the kernel of old traditions is that Clement was one of the most important presbyters of the church of Rome, or the most important in the time subsequent to the apostolic age. He is, to quote Lightfoot, "rather the chief of the presbyters than the chief over the presbyters." Since he writes his letter in the name of the church, and conceals his own name and authority, we conclude that the community was still sovereign.

The next authority after Clement who deserves passing notice is Hermas. Disputes cloud his fame somewhat. A brother of Pius, who was bishop of Rome about the middle of the second century, he remained to his death a layman. A slave by birth, he rose into a state of financial ease, being a commercial man. His book, the *Shepherd*, ascribed to dates ranging from 97 by Zahn to 142 by Lipsius, enjoyed great popularity for many years, and has been compared to *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was a tame novel, holding the place in that

time of the Sunday-school literature of to-day, by which as a side-door fiction makes its way into the Church. The work consists of five visions, twelve commandments, and ten parables, and is the allegorical writing of a simple-minded Christian. Ritschl's theory is that the *Pastor of Hermas* represents the stage where the Presbyterianism of Rome was changing into Episcopalianism, against which it is a protest. Such sentences as "who would fain have the first seat," "who are at emulation one with another for the first place in some honours," are supposed to be directed against the arrogant spirit of the ecclesiastics.

There is not much to be gained from this writing in the way of insight into Church organisation. The order is left with Hermas to deliver the book to presbyters. He was to write one book and give it to Clement and the other to Grapti. Hermas is also "to read this to the city with the elders who preside over the Church." Apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons are mentioned. Lightfoot says "the notices to the shepherd are in themselves too vague to lead to any result. Were it not that the writer's own brother was a bishop of Rome, we should be at a loss what to say about the constitution of the Roman Church in his day." Sanday thinks that as bishops are not referred to in an

official way, the form of government implied in the writings of Hermas was presbyterian.

There are some who discover in the letter of Clement the outline of what was ere long to be a leading doctrine of Catholicism, *apostolic succession*. The passage quoted in its support is as follows: "Our apostles also knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed ministers already mentioned, and afterwards gave instruction, that when they (these ministers, *not* the apostles) should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot justly be dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties."¹ Gore declares that this chapter expresses very

¹ Chap. xliv.

plainly the fundamental principle of apostolic succession, according to which the ministers of the Church are appointed from above, and "must derive their authority from that one mission by which Christ came forth from God and the apostles from Christ: in virtue of which the same apostles appointed bishops and deacons, and afterwards took measures to secure the perpetuation of the office in due succession."¹

But the dogma of Apostolic Succession dates from the age of Irenæus, when it arose in order to protect the faith of the Church against Gnostic heresy. Clement does not state this later theory of succession in this passage. He does not argue for the restoration of these elders on the ground that they were appointed by the apostles, but on the ground of their blameless occupancy of the office; and in this argument he admits that in case of a *fama* being proved against the elders, then action might be permissible. It is the unprovoked dismissal that Clement condemns as a matter of injustice. But if the congregation were vested with this power of dismissing their ministers under fitting circumstances, this takes for granted that they had in their hands the appointment of them. Hence the passage does not mean that the ministers

¹ *Church and Ministry*, p. 321.

of Corinth have taken the official place of the apostles. It is the desire of the author to have things done in order. He insists upon a regular and responsible ministry; but he does not claim for the ministry the transmission of power derived from the apostles. With Clement as with Paul, anarchy and disorder are an abomination; and the passage was composed with the view to a fixed and orderly leadership, rather than in the interests of a clerical class. He writes: "Consider the soldiers who obey their chiefs, with what order, with what docility, with what submission they execute their orders. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the general."¹ Thus early in the Church is Rome the upholder of law.

Equally futile are the attempts to discover the origin of *sacerdotalism* in this letter. Réville has an interesting opinion, that while Episcopacy arose in Asia Minor, sacerdotalism appeared first in Rome, and that it was only as Episcopacy was

¹ "The belief that there is reference to apostolic succession in chap. xlv. is generally abandoned" (Harnack, *Chronologie*, i. p. 255).

transferred to Roman soil, that the priestly growths gathered around the bishop. In this theory Clement's letter is the first Catholic epistle emanating from Rome, and replete with sacerdotalism. Rome, it is said, was the home of traditions, forms, rituals. Here the magnificent sacrifices and processions and ceremonies of the capital had wrought themselves into the spirit of the community, and the same temper naturally reappears in the church itself; so that the community at Rome is the first to display the love of ritual and tradition. Réville discerns a strong clerical bent in the letter favourable to priestly authority; the distinction between clergy and laity¹ is run throughout its pages. Indeed, he regards the letter as a significant plea for Church supremacy. "Ritualism, nascent sacerdotalism, sovereign authority of tradition, the institution of bishop and deacons by the apostles, ecclesiastical authority founded on a regular succession, obedience to superiors, assimilation of obedience to the ecclesiastical government with obedience to God: all the leading principles of Roman Catholicism are already found in the epistle of Clement." Allen also refers to the sacerdotal tendency of this epistle;² and Moberly

¹ The word laity appears for the first time in Clement.

² Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 49.

discovers in the letter of Clement an instance of the intrusion of unordained ministers into the legally-ordained eldership.

It is true that an analogy is drawn between the ministry and the Aaronic priesthood; but this analogy is not carried so far as identity. The sacrifices are said to be made by the whole congregation, not by the priest; and the act of those who deposed the presbyters in Corinth is not sacrilege, but a sin against order and decorum. The writer makes free use of the Old Testament in support of his arguments, "For to the high priest peculiar services are intrusted, and the priests have their peculiar office assigned to them; and on the Levites peculiar ministrations are imposed. . . . Let each one of us, brethren, in his own rank give thanks to God, retaining a good conscience, not transgressing the appointed rule of his service." But here the author is using the Old Testament priesthood as an illustration to press home his teaching on order, and the consecration to the office by means of a priestly act is not once referred to. The church at Corinth required a lesson in Church discipline, and Clement stands for constituted leadership. Thus Lightfoot: "Dwelling at great length on the subject, Clement nevertheless advances no sacerdotal

claims or immunities on behalf of the ejected ministers." ¹

An interesting question arises, when we inquire why it was that the Roman church undertook to give advice to the church at Corinth. Is there any sign thus early of the Roman claim of primacy? Is it the beginning of *Roman Catholicism*? This is the light in which the upholders of the supremacy of the Roman see regard the letter of Clement. Also Sohm of Leipzig accepts this epistle as the first Catholic letter, in that it lays down constitution or law, rather than faith, as the basis of the Church.² The result of the letter, he says, was the introduction of the episcopate at Rome; whence the Roman form of government passed over into Corinth and so east through the empire, Rome being the home of Episcopacy, and this epistle of Clement the first Roman Catholic epistle. Carl Mirbt also, in his *Sources for the History of the Papacy*, which contains all the quotations from early records bearing on the Roman claims, put as his first source this letter of Clement.

In the foregoing discussion we have seen that Rome was late in introducing monarchical episcopacy, so that it is unnecessary to deal with the formal

¹ *Philippians*, p. 249.

² *Kirchenrecht*, ii. chap. ii.

supremacy of the bishop of Rome. Also as the assumptions of this church were largely the result of the action of individual pontiffs, who had not yet appeared, the thought of such primacy could not thus early have dawned upon the Christian world. However, this much may be admitted, that the Roman church, as the most active of all the churches, had an attentive eye for other communities, and an interested heart for their disorders; so that a moral influence was gained by this congregation over the other communities, which was not lost for many a century. In the Church unity of these early days, when faith, love, and hope were the main bonds of communion, there would be no claim of primacy. Clement does not write with the conscious superiority of the dweller in Rome the capital, but with the convictions of a Christian brother who is solicitous that peace and concord may abound in the world. His closing prayer is, "Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth, as Thou gavest to our fathers when they called on Thee in faith and truth with holiness, that we may be saved; while we render obedience to Thine Almighty and most excellent name, and to our rulers and governors upon the earth."

CHAPTER VII

ASIA MINOR AND IGNATIUS

THE life of Asia Minor was intense, and above the dead level of the commonplace. New ideas speedily took root and grew luxuriantly among the population. It was the *West* of that day. The Lycus Valley, with the three adjacent towns, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossæ, abounded in natural beauties, and in a fecundity which made it a place of thriving trade. All these towns were full of a changing life, especially Hierapolis, which was a famed watering-place, with all the accompaniments of a pleasure resort.

“Hail ! fairest soil in all broad Asia’s realm ;
Hail ! golden city, nymph divine, bedecked
With flowing rills, thy jewels.”¹

Here Epictetus, loftiest of heathen moralists, had been born. Not too far off to have caught the same spirit was Ephesus, on the main road to the

¹ Lightfoot, *Colossians*.

capital, almost within call of the river Meander, whose southern banks were also well adorned with towns, and which offered an alternative route for the traveller who did not wish to go Romewards *viâ* Philadelphia, Sardis, and Smyrna.

Churches had been formed in most of these cities, although the origin of the congregations is for the most part shrouded in darkness ; and since these partook of the prevailing spirit of change and advance, it has been a widespread belief that Episcopacy had its rise in Asia Minor, marked as this province was by the fermentation of intellectual and spiritual opinions. While we have not been able to see any definite trace of the existence of episcopal régime in the apostolic time, unless it be in the presidency of James, we now pass into a sphere where the monarchical government of the Church is in full sway. The plural *episkopoi* is replaced by the singular *episkopos*. And since it is the writings of Ignatius that yield us the earliest information on the subject, we shall now seek to define his position in the early Church.

Ignatius, or Theophorus, the second bishop of Antioch in Syria, was condemned to be offered as a sacrifice in the city of Rome. His journey thither was a royal progress, so many were the receptions by the way. At Smyrna he remained

for a short time, and had conferences with the bishops of the churches on the loop road which he could not travel. Inspired, perhaps, by the representations made by these bishops, he wrote letters to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, places within a few miles of one another. In addition to these three, he wrote a letter to the Romans, which, because of its distinct form and different tone in regard to episcopacy, has led men like Renan to select this as the only genuine letter of Ignatius.¹ Pursuing his journey to Troas in Macedonia, he wrote three more epistles, one to Smyrna, another to Philadelphia, cities recently visited by him, and a third to Polycarp, the beloved bishop of Smyrna.

These seven epistles have been the object of much criticism; but the Ignatian controversy, which arose because of the existence of several recensions of the letters, may now be regarded as settled. There are still a few voices of scepticism heard from the lowlands of Holland, some of whose advanced scholars seek an unworthy celebrity by sensational criticism. Such are van Loon and van Manen. Their decisions, however, rest on a less

¹ M. Bruston reverses the estimate of Renan, claiming that the letter to the Romans alone is spurious, and that it is a late glorification of martyrdom.

stable foundation than some of their own cities; and the criticism of Réville on these gentlemen, who deplete the first century of all its contents, is that they are guilty of the error of false perspective. Since the masterful work of Bishop Lightfoot on the *Apostolic Fathers*,—one of the choice monuments of British scholarship,—there has been general agreement in accepting the authenticity of the seven epistles of Ignatius in the shorter Greek recension, as mentioned in Eusebius.

When we inquire about the date of the letters, we find less unanimity. Löning puts the *terminus ad quem* in the year 150 A.D. He affirms that by this time the monarchical episcopate was established in all parts of the empire; and since the letter to the *Romans* as well as the letter of Polycarp to the *Philippians*, which is of the same age as the Ignatian epistles, contain no mention of the bishop, these writings must have preceded the period when Episcopacy was universal.

Because of our ignorance of Gnostic heresy it is claimed that we are not to lay much stress on the argument from the doctrine of the epistles; but the leading heresies attacked therein seem to be of the early type that existed about the beginning of the second century. A very annoying heresy for the good bishop is *Docetism*, which dissolved

the corporeal nature of Jesus into appearance. This he combats chiefly in the letters to the *Trallians* and *Smyrnæans*, where he grows very eloquent in defence of a real incarnation as the only justification of what he believes. "But if, as some that are without God, that is, the unbelieving, say, that He only seemed to suffer, then why am I in bonds? Why do I long to be exposed to the wild beasts? Flee, therefore, these evil offshoots which produce death-bearing fruit."¹ Again, in *Smyrnæans*: "And He suffered truly, as He also truly raised Himself up. For I know that after His resurrection also, He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now"; or again: "For what does anyone profit me, if he commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that He was possessed of a body?"² While the heresy attacked in these passages may bear a slight similitude to the later Greek heresies, its simple form is rather that of the early *Docetæ*.

The second heresy condemned in the letters is *Judaism*. It is noteworthy that these same heresies were associated in the teaching of Philo, whose Jewish method of Greek allegorising was transferred from him to the early Christian Fathers in their treatment of the Incarnation. The churches

¹ *Tral.* 10.

² *Smyr.* 2, 3.

of Magnesia and Philadelphia more than others are warned against Judaism. "Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. . . . It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to Judaize. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, that so every tongue that believeth might be gathered together to God."¹

Löning, von der Goltz, and Réville place the martyrdom in the third or fourth decade of the second century. But their decisions are much coloured by the late date they assign to the Pastorals, which presuppose some years of expansion between their organisation and the rise of the episcopacy of Ignatius. These writers, giving a later origin to 1 *Timothy* and *Titus*, are constrained to assign a correspondingly later date to the Ignatian epistles; but if the authenticity of the Pastorals be accepted, there is no cause to differ from the opinion of the late Bishop of Durham, who says, "Ignatius' martyrdom may with a great degree of probability be placed within a few years of 110: before or after."²

¹ *Magn.* 8, 10.

² Harnack dates the letters 110-117, or 117-125; Bruston, 100-118.

As a personality, Ignatius is one of the most captivating of all the apostolic Fathers. Of very intense nature, he had not the mental grasp of Clement; but his lack of intellectual genius was compensated for by his surplus of energy. His type of mind was conspicuously religious; and with his simple nature one cannot but be charmed, the very excesses of his character being failings that leaned to virtue's side. Perhaps the letter to the Romans, because of its extravagance, jars upon us more than any other. Here he courts martyrdom as the fittest choice for himself, pleading with his readers that they should not tear from him his hope of honour. "I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb and leave nothing of my body. . . . May I enjoy the wild beasts; and I pray that they may be found eager to rush upon me, which also I will entice to devour me speedily."¹

Such ardour for self-immolation strikes a dis-

¹ *Rom.* 4, 5.

cordant note, and appears unnatural, like the out-pouring of some *exalté* in a moment of fantastical ecstasy. We prefer to read the pathetic into martyrdom, and can scarce do justice to this rapture of joy, which makes death so pleasant a thing, and calls it sweet names. The modern martyr grows faint at the rush of the lion, and trembles to think of the loud rending wheel. Miss Rossetti's "A Martyr," reveals the difference between the modern ideal and the Ignatian.

"For sweet are sunshine and this upper air,
And life and youth are sweet and give us room
For all most sweetest sweetnesses we taste.

So now a little spare me, and show forth
Some pity, O my God, some pity of me."

However, the fervour of Ignatius' love and the spirit of self-forgetfulness are worthy of all admiration. His joyous martyrdom is a reflection of his hero, Paul, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and longed to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. In few of the early writings do we meet such devotion to the Saviour. His interest is altogether in the spiritual part of his work; all else grows dim before the brightness of love for the Lord. "To me Jesus Christ is the place of all that is ancient: His cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith

which is by Him, are undefiled monuments of antiquity." His advice to the Ephesians, "Let nothing glitter in your eyes beside Jesus Christ," goes to explain how the tradition of Vicentius of Beauvais might arise, that when his heart was cut into small pieces, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was found inscribed in golden letters on every piece, for he had Christ in his heart.

This characterisation may be of service in estimating how far the sacerdotal leanings ascribed to Ignatius are compatible with one whose predominant note was modest spirituality.

The most superficial reading of these letters reveals the importance of the *bishop's* position, associated though he is with the presbyters and deacons. The introductions of the various epistles are usually so expressed as to create an enthusiasm in the congregation favourable to their bishop: "I received therefore your whole multitude in the name of God, through Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love, and your bishop in the flesh, whom I pray you by Jesus Christ to love, and that you would all seek to be like him. And blessed is He who granted him unto you, being worthy to obtain such an excellent bishop."¹

¹ *Eph.* i.

Every part of Church activity is associated with the bishop. The readers are asked to look upon him as they would look upon God: "For we ought to receive everyone whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, as we would do Him that sent him." "Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical manner, obey your bishop." "As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop, and presbyters." "Be ye subject to the bishop, as Jesus Christ was to the Father."¹ Again, in *Trallians*: "He that is within the Altar is pure, but he that is without is not pure: that is, he who does anything apart from the bishop and presbytery and deacons, such a man is not pure in his conscience." For the bishop of the Philadelphians he is struck with admiration, a man in harmony with the will of God as a harp with its strings. The 8th and 9th chapters of *Smyrnæans* are perhaps the classical passages: "See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father; and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and

¹ *Magn.* 3 ff.

reverence the deacons as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist which is administered either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has intrusted it. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatever he shall approve of is also pleasing to God. . . . He who honours the bishop has been honoured of God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does serve the devil." These passages will suffice to show that besides refuting the heresies of Judaism and Docetism, Ignatius desired to impress upon the Church the necessity of obedience to the bishop as the representative person in each *Ecclesia*.

The epistle to the *Romans* alone represents a condition of things in which a wider sphere of authority exists. Here Ignatius addresses the *church* of Rome as "the one which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans."¹ What is noticeable in this case is, that this writer, who is so

¹ Some draw from this passage the inference that the Roman church presided over the suburban sees; but this is a much later conception. Others appeal to this as proof of the precedence given to Rome as the capital of the empire—*Cathedra Petri*. But the natural meaning is that in comparison with the other churches in this region, the church in the city of Rome was the principal one.

particular in calling attention to the bishop of each church, and who himself was bishop of Antioch, and was probably condemned because of his pronounced leadership, makes no mention of the bishop of Rome. The easiest explanation of this fact is, not that he is unacquainted with the bishop, but that as yet there was no bishop in Rome. The church is addressed as a whole, and Ignatius refrains from speaking of the bishop because there is none to speak of, since the form of ecclesiastical government in Syria was not as yet dominant in the capital of the empire.

From this Réville draws the inference that Asia Minor was the home of the uninominal bishop: "The epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp confirm the conclusion to which the Pastorals had led us, which is, that the monarchical episcopate had its birth in Asia Minor, and that, especially in the Greek communities of this part of the empire, it rapidly developed, while as yet it was not existent in other parts."¹

We accept this position, that Episcopacy arose in Asia Minor. But we must not allow ourselves to be led astray by preconceived notions of what the bishop was. We should greatly obscure the record of the first and second centuries by carrying back

¹ Réville, 509.

to this primitive time our modern conception of the dignity and power of the prelate, who directs the government of ecclesiastical affairs in a large diocese, and whose chief work is an administration so extensive that a modern dignitary has said of his office that "the bishop is the slave of details." The parochial system, with its large diocese and multitude of clergymen under the jurisdiction of the central bishop, did not appear till the time of the Merovingian and Carolingian kings, *c.* 700–1000 A.D.

In proceeding to study the form of organisation which Ignatius' letters presuppose, we notice first of all, that the bishop of Ignatius was not in any sense a diocesan bishop. The bishop is the presiding officer in each congregation, and in this corresponds rather to the modern minister than to the modern bishop. He is ably supported by the presbytery, which may not inaptly be compared with the session of the Presbyterian congregations of to-day, and his deacons may not suffer if likened to the modern deacons' court. The letters clearly point to a threefold form of government; which is not, however, the system of an episcopal see, but is the equipment of each congregation. Many passages make it clear that the influence of the bishop, though paramount, is not autocratic, since

the presbytery is a court which merits obedience.¹ It would seem as if the bishop were the distributor of grace, whereas the presbyters are the representatives and guardians of order. While the bishop is admittedly the chief of the community, the presbyters and deacons are no less worthy of veneration; and the language concerning their relations suggests not so much an inferiority in office between superiors and inferiors, as a union in council with the bishop as president. The deacon was the *syndoulos* of the bishop, accompanying him on his journey, and acting as his agent.²

In passing, it is worth noting that the principle of apostolic succession is absent from the mind of Ignatius, and that he does not seek the sanction of the apostles for the episcopal office. The bishop is the representative either of God or of Christ; and the presbyters stand in the place of the apostles: "The bishop presiding after the likeness of God, and the presbyters after the likeness of the council of the apostles."³ Ignatius is also careful to separate himself from the apostles, as being unworthy to give absolutely authoritative commands; and he does not claim to sit in their seat. He is only the slave of Christ, in whom no assumption of apostolic dignity is traceable. Elsewhere, there-

¹ *Eph.* 2, 20.

² Lightfoot, *Philippians*.

³ *Magn.* 6.

fore, must men look for the origin of that late product, apostolical succession.

Indeed a mistake is made in regarding Ignatius as an ecclesiastic. He is essentially the Pastor. He is a High Churchman in the sense of esteeming fellowship with the Church very highly. But he is no sacerdotalist. His was the instinct for ministerial government, and his the desire of Paul to present every believer without spot in Christ Jesus.

In order to account for the teaching of Ignatius concerning the bishop, it is necessary to consider two facts: one personal, the other local.

1. *Personal*.—For pure theology Ignatius displayed a marked impatience, and we look to him in vain for much helpful discussion on the Atonement, Holy Spirit, or Trinity. His one engrossing conception was that of unity (*henōsis*).¹ Jesus Christ is all and in all, because He is the union of spiritual and material. In Christ Jesus the divine is united with the human, the spiritual with the material, the external with the temporal. He is the earthly witness of all that is great. This explains the strong antipathy to Docetism, which denies that the Divine Spirit could find incarnate expression. The word “flesh” is accordingly very

¹ Cf. von der Goltz, *Ignatius von Antiochien*.

common in the letters, "Christ came not in appearance, but in the flesh, and as such is the life of the community. He is our true life." Ignatius teaches that Christ is mystically united with His Church in a real though unseen relation; and in this attempt to appropriate the Pauline theology he approaches most nearly to the idea of his teacher. "For if I in this brief space of time have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop, how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity."

It is in connection with the Ignatian doctrine of the Church that the word *Catholic* for the first time looms before the historian; but it is to be observed that the term has not acquired that party signification which it came to have in the fourth century. In considering its use by Ignatius, one is faintly reminded of the Platonic teaching which represents the earthly creation as the copy of the divine ideas. The Catholic Church is the unity which abides in God's presence; yet each church on earth, as a copy of the original in heaven, is also catholic. It is the fleshly embodiment of the spiritual antitype; so that the Church as organised is parallel with the Incarnation of Christ. It is the

Church according to the flesh ; for as Christ took upon Him the fleshly nature to make His work effectual, so the Church must also have its material form.

In the government of the Church, God is the sole authority, and as such is the Bishop of the Catholic Church ; but since the earthly Church must be the counterpart of the heavenly, the bishop of the community is the copy of the divine bishop. The bishop is always the type of God ; so that where the bishop is honoured, it is not so much he who is honoured but God, and where he is disobeyed, the act is a mutiny against God whom he represents. Thus the reason why the community is so urgently required to listen to the dictates of the bishop is that the will of the bishop is the will of God. The presupposition of all the Ignatian letters is that as Jesus is the norm of the Father, so all bishops are the norm of Jesus, and thus of the Father. The bishop is God's representative, not because he is correctly chosen, or because he is ordained by the apostles, but because he is the chief member of the fleshly Church in which the Spirit of God dwells. The single community with the bishop at its head is the fleshly representative of the spiritual congregation of Christ. The Church below is the counterpart of that above ;

and the bishop is the visible unity of the Church : not of all the churches, but of the one community. The Catholic Church is wherever Christ is. The bishop is the representative of Christ. Hence where the bishop is there is the Catholic Church.

The benefits of Church life are not temporal or worldly, but consist of love and faith, and most of all, of the unity which men are to keep in the bond of peace. This Church unity Ignatius regarded as the greatest blessing. Thus he pleads with the Philadelphians as a man devoted to unity, while he bids Polycarp have a regard to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Every disturbance of the peace of the community, be it difference of faith or love, is virtual denial of faith in God, and is to be reprimanded. Ignatius was the apostle of *henōsis* or unity.

2. *Local*.— But with Ignatius, as is often the case, the theoretic, if not the creation of his environment, was yet to a great extent modified thereby. Asia Minor was the home of sects, and unity was its most needed reform. The ferment of new and old was active ; east and west, meeting like opposing streams, caused no small commotion. Being the arena of numerous philosophies, mysteries, theosophies, it naturally became the hot-

bed of Christian heresies; so that it is to Asia Minor we look for the rapid appearance of the sectional spirit among Christians.¹ Into the secret place of the holy Church the spirit of division entered. The pious Eastern turned naturally to that individualism whose dangers are evident in every age. The enthusiastic convert often becomes a specialist in some unimportant doctrine. He lays hold of a part of theology which is so magnified in his eyes that it eclipses truth as a whole. His creed is confined to one article, much to the detriment of his own mental and spiritual life, and to the exclusion of many brethren from his fellowship. This tendency to separation must have been rife in the lands of Asia Minor, the home of stubborn converts who would ride their religious hobby against the wishes of the Church.

The monarchical bishop was an offset to this intense individualism. Ignatius, with a careful eye for the welfare of the Church of Christ, outlined in his theory of Episcopacy a strong system of suitable leadership, and determined to do all he could to strengthen the hands of the bishop. In his letters he is not describing what exists, but is rather telling of what he would like to see exist. There were

¹ This characteristic had already been observed by Paul in *Colossians*.

no doubt uninominal bishops in these churches ; but the tone of the Ignatian epistles is that of one aspiring after an ideal. "A close analysis of his evidence proves that the reality was far from corresponding to his desire, and that if he is obliged to insist so much on obedience to the bishop, it is because the churches which he addresses are still far from putting it into practice." He is impassioned, and sees things through a glowing imagination. By his own confession, also, the introduction of the single bishop is an innovation. "He is my witness for whose sake I am in bonds, that I got no intelligence from any man. But the Spirit proclaimed these words, Do nothing without the Bishop."¹ Here he maintains that if his monarchical episcopacy is an innovation, it is directly due to the Spirit of God. Allen represents Ignatius as the last of the prophets, who by his silence concerning their office condemns them. "The order of prophets is growing weak. Ignatius represents prophecy as signing the warrant for its own dissolution. He used his prophetic gift to announce the coming of another régime, the catholic order, in which formal prophecy would be done away."²

Ignatius does not speak in the interests of the

¹ *Phil.* 7.

² Allen, *Christian Institutions*, 69.

personal prerogative of the bishop. His message is that of a dying man concerned with the deepest problems that can fill his mind. In the anarchy of thought and life visible in the fluctuating events of his age, his one mission is to bring about the unity that is the essence of God, and to stay the advance of sects and heresies that are shattering the peace of the Church. "I therefore, yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, entreat you that ye use Christian nourishment only, and abstain from herbage of a different kind."¹ "Keep yourselves from these evil plants which Jesus Christ does not tend. Not that I have found division among you, but filtering. For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop."² Indeed in his warmth he so far forgets himself as to use language of exceeding severity: "Wherefore as children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines. For there are many wolves. . . . For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, against whom ye must be on your guard, inasmuch as they are men who scarcely can be cured,"³—evidence from olden times that when a man becomes a heresy-hunter there is no restraint to his utterance.

The bishop of these letters has been well likened

¹ *Tral.* 6.

² *Philad.* 3.

³ *Eph.* 7.

to the missionary of to-day, who often has to act as a father and leader to wayward and half-educated converts. Ignatius was a believer in leaders, a hero-worshipper. He saw in the bishops of the local churches men of capacity who have the gift of government. He felt that the time required a minister, that could hold firm control of the congregation, and by wise statesmanship act as the premier in the councils of each church.

Thus two factors combined to form the Ignatian ideal of Church organisation: (1) his doctrine of *unity*, that the Church being the visible, fleshly representation of the heavenly Church, required an earthly leader, a bishop, even as God was the one bishop of the Catholic Church in heaven; (2) the demand of the time. These account for his constant panegyric of the episcopal system, which he regards as a great practical expediency.

But whereas, in the interests of Church order, Ignatius thus insists upon the obedience to the bishop, and decides that without the bishop's command, even marriages were not to be undertaken, none the less we have no evidence of hierarchical or sacerdotal elements in the letters. The author is a thoroughgoing evangelical, and there is no mediation of bishop or priest coming between God and man. Each Christian has direct entrance

by means of his own prayers into the presence of God. "Where Christ is there is the Church, and Jesus is the door of the Father."

In the same way, the Lord's Supper is interpreted as spiritual; nor does his account necessarily include any of the later Catholic teaching, although some find traces of it. The best known passages in the letters are those of *Ephesians*, where he calls the Lord's Supper "a drug for immortality"; and of *Smyrnæans*! "They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ." The Catholic identification of bread and flesh, blood and wine, is not contained in this passage, which is a refutation of the *Docetæ*. While there is closest relation between the fleshly and spiritual, yet it is not found in the Supper. The magic of the later age is wanting; as is shown by the fact that Ignatius presupposes faith in the recipient, without which no fellowship with Christ is possible. The Lord's Supper is a specialised part of the Christian life. It resembles the Christian life in quality, and is an intensification of the gospel offer of salvation. The sacrament is not a sacrifice performed by the priests, but is the concrete expression of the new life of Christ for the believer. So that in respect of the sacraments

as of other matters, Ignatius makes no allusion to the bishop as empowered with the hieratical privileges which later Catholicism ascribed to the episcopate. "While he collects with a veritable passion all the causes that make of the episcopal power an anchor of salvation for Christians, Ignatius passes in absolute silence the Catholic authority, the sacramental power, the apostolical institution of the episcopate, and the principle of apostolical succession."¹

In reviewing the system of Ignatius, we gladly admit that the purpose of his organisation was admirable, and it is possible that the control by means of a central authority advocated by him was a necessity of the time. However, there is always danger in placing unlimited authority in one person; and the weakness of the system was that Ignatius esteemed too lightly the opinion of the brotherhood, and was tempted to distrust the benign influences of liberty, that greatest of educators. He also overlooked the dangers of sovereignty. Without a consciousness of it, he was changing the faith of the gospel into a law; obedience to the bishop is beginning to take the place of faith in Jesus Christ.

¹ Réville, 517.

In these letters we have for the first time met with the monarchical bishop as the single leader in each community. He is not the official of the whole Church, but exercises authority within the bounds of his own congregation. Asia Minor, says Mommsen, was a country accustomed from ancient times to monarchical government.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DAWN OF CATHOLICISM

WE have watched the growth of the scattered communities as they were formed into congregations, when each local group of believers attained to corporate life. Consolidation increased, and a compacted Church arose with different grades of ministry. By the middle of the second century this ministry had assumed a uniform shape in most of the Christian countries of the Roman world, comprising the bishop as the leader and the elders and deacons as his assistants. In a well-ordered parish this was afterwards to be augmented by many of the aids that came into use through the suggestion of contemporary society. Sub-deacons were to be allotted to deacons; and acolytes, with exorcists, readers, and door-watchers, formed part of a clerical system that was ere long to excel the municipal governments in the ramification and complexity of its organism. The clergy of each

Episcopal Church were to form a regular and permanent society; and the cathedrals of such sees as Constantinople and Carthage came in time to have an ecclesiastical regiment of upwards of five hundred ministers.

But with the growing importance of the individual churches a comparatively new feature emerges, which results in a wider movement. This is the confederation of the separate churches into an external organisation. Even as the empire, being one in the world of civilisation, had its principles of communication and its channels of intercourse, so also the Church, though originally possessing only the faintest external expression of the intrinsic spiritual life, that united what to ordinary appearance was a disconnected mass of isolated units, was soon to have its bond of fellowship and its lines of intercommunion. The Church is on the way to an organised union.

“All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle.”

There had always been a sense of fellowship among Christians; and the brotherhood of the Church had been most intimately felt. The visions of Paul of the body of Christ as being one in all the world, have never been surpassed by any that since then have dawned upon the Christian conscious-

ness. But thus far the tie of union was the belief in a common home in heaven at the time of the kingdom's consummation. The Church on earth was a sojourner, and Christians were to unite with the Lord Jesus Christ, when the troublous days of this world had given place to the entrance of a new heaven and a new earth. The unity had not been external but spiritual. It was the union of a common faith, such as is described in Ephesians, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." Ignatius had with his tamer Paulinism struck upon the word *Katholike*, which was to play a more important part than he imagined. He was eager to create a sense of fellowship between the individual churches; and the exhortation to send representatives to the church at Antioch displays the anxiety of the sainted bishop to foster kindly feelings; but in these letters, as in those of Paul, the Church or the community of believers attains her unity through the Holy Spirit. The essential feature in early Christendom is the new life that comes through Christ, arising from the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus; and the Holy Church and the Holy Spirit are woven closely together. The

Church is still an assemblage of all who believe in Christ. Though Christians may be scattered from one another, they are part of one Church, because Christ is there; wheresoever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is Christ. Such is the belief of Ignatius. "He knows nothing of an empirical union of the different communities into one Church, guaranteed by law or officer. The bishop is of importance only for the individual community, and has as yet nothing to do with the essence of the Church; and the separate communities are still united by faith, love, hope. Christ is the invisible Bishop, and each individual church is an image of the heavenly Church."¹

But as in some Venetian pictures of architecture there is often a window, small and latticed, through which the receding landscape may be faintly observed, growing dimmer in the distance, while the foreground stands forth bold and imposing; so in the Church of this time the horizon of the early Christian hope recedes into the distance, the chiliastic expectations of the return of the Messiah and the halcyon days of the primitive Church fade from the view, and a structure, massive and bold, a rigid organisation, grows upon the sight.

¹ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ii. 73.

The early bond of unity was a tie too mystical; the vision is replaced by something visible; the union must be that which one can touch and see. We pass into *Catholicism*. The early form of the creed, "I believe in the Holy *Christian* Church," is to be replaced by the words, "I believe in the Holy *Catholic* Church." There is a confederation of visibly organised communities.

The basis of Catholicism is confessedly the doctrine that the Church as seen upon earth, constituted and ruled by bishops, and afterwards by one Pope, was originated by Christ and is identical with the Church of Christ. The constitution of the Church is to be the leading factor; and obedience to clerical authority is to be regarded as superior to faith in the Spirit of Christ. The tie of brotherly love that cemented the churches of the primitive years is to give place to the tie of organisation. There will now be a visibly constituted Church, outside of which there is no salvation; and the soul of the believer will approach God through the "universal consciousness represented by the sacerdotal order."¹

Catholicism claims a divine origin for what is merely empirical. It is felt to be necessary that the law of the Church should be strengthened by

¹ Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 94.

some sanction more than that of the person who makes the law. Accordingly all things in this visible Church, its law, form, organisation, doctrine, are traced back to apostolic sources, which is equivalent to saying that they are divine. The Catholic Church claims to be the depository of divine truth. It enthrones tradition, and places the *bishop* in the seat of authority. The episcopate, therefore, is the heart of Catholicism.

We proceed to examine some of the causes which were operative in this time, and which led the Christian Church to the development of Catholicism and the episcopate.

1. *Internal.* (a) The conditions of fellowship demanded an authorised medium. The communities in different lands had the same faith and practice, but questions must necessarily arise in a progressive society that involve new departures. Problems of policy, conduct, casuistry, will be forced upon the members of the Church; and if the harmony between the separate congregations is to be maintained, some means must be employed to foster agreement. In the actual development of intercourse betwixt the congregations, the official who holds the reins of government in each community must of necessity come to the front, and must play a decisive part in the larger

organisation. Hence the bishops, as the ruling heads of the community, naturally became the media of intercourse; and when Church councils were called, they went as the most natural representatives. Or if in other ways the Church came into public notice, these officials would be selected for prominence. In the struggle against the secular government, when laws were enacted in the Roman world that were injurious to Christians, the bishops would be the first to attract public attention, so that it is no wonder that in the persecutions bishops figure quite prominently. They had assumed a definite leadership, through which they were recognised by outside agencies as the representatives of the Church. Thus is it that the history of Catholicism is largely a history of the episcopate.

So important is this factor that Ramsay assigns to it the leading place in the growth of Church government. "The bishops soon became the directors of the Church as a party struggling against the government. . . . The view which I take is that the central idea in the development of the episcopal office lay in the duty of each community to maintain communication with other communities. The officials who performed this duty became the guardians of unity. They acquired importance first in the universal Church, and thereafter, partly

in virtue of this extra-congregational position, partly through other causes, they became the heads of the individual communities.”¹

(b) Another internal cause for the growth of Catholicism was the rise of legislation. Sohm declares that the “foundation of Catholicism is the divine Church law laid claim to by it. From this we may draw the conclusion that by the rise of the doctrine of such divine law Catholicism is developed; and the question about the rise of Catholicism is identical with the question of the rise of the doctrine of a divinely ordained Church law.” He goes so far as to describe this tendency as the bane of Christianity, whereby its vital faith was changed into Catholic dogma. “The whole essence of Catholicism consists in its declaring legal institutions to be necessary to the Church.” In answering the question how the spiritual power of Christianity passed into this legally constituted Church, Sohm appeals to the natural instinct of man. “The natural man is a born enemy of Christianity, for he desires to remain under law rather than in the free grace of personal faith. He

¹ Perhaps Ramsay overestimates slightly the federal duties of the bishop. I think that the monarchical bishop came to the front first of all in the local community; but it is quite possible that the deference paid to him as a factor in the larger union would reflect glory back upon his local position and increase his influence there.

longs for a legally appointed Church with ritual and gorgeous vestments: a Church to be seen with the eyes, built with earthly gold and precious stones. He desires as a keystone a fixed body of doctrine that shall give certain intelligence concerning all divine mysteries. Christ walked on the sea: man would do so likewise. Alas he sinks! He desires a rock which his eyes can see—the visible Church. The natural man is a born Catholic.”¹

Sohm says that the Lord's Supper was the starting-point for the introduction of this legal Christianity. This was the most important rite in the corporate life of the community, the one external form inherent in the teaching of the Saviour; and the person who dispensed the elements gained an increasing distinction. Thus the bishop, as the leader in the sacrament, came to be the head of the community. He was the organ of the *ecclesia* and indispensable to its life and action: with the result that where the bishop is, there alone is the *ecclesia*. The Church has changed not merely its constitution but its faith. Personal communion with Christ is the secret and the power of its Christian life, but communion with Christ now depends on outward form and on the bishop. This is the essence of Catholicism.

¹ Sohm, *Outlines of Church History*, and *Kirchenrecht*.

The Church is no more founded on the communion of believers ; it is founded on an institution, the episcopal. The law of the Church becomes the key of Catholicism.

Even though we may not accept this theory of Sohm in its entirety, whereby Catholicism is derived from the law, there is sufficient truth in it to give it a place in the origins of the Catholic system, for the bishop exercised a strong part in the formulation and exercise of a code of Church law.

2. But the most important factor remains to be mentioned. Besides these internal causes there was an *external* one, opposition to heresy. Nearly all Church forms are the more or less direct result of the conflict in which the Church was involved with Gnosticism. The heretic is the real though innocent originator of Catholicism.

We greatly misread the first centuries when we think that all who named the name of Christ submitted to the change that came creeping into the Church, or agreed with all the doctrine preached in the communities. The orthodox Church, to borrow a later term, was not co-terminous with Christendom. We know that, along with the union of communities or churches which was called the Catholic Church, there were many sects. Even as late as the time of Cyprian (250) the confederation

of churches did not extend to any region beyond the confines of the Roman Empire, nor did it embrace all the orthodox or episcopally organised communities within its bounds. Outside the Catholic Church and running parallel with it, like smaller streams, were Churches which did not accept all the doctrines of the episcopal congregations, and which were called heretical.

It is only within recent years that justice has been done to the reflex influences of outside communities on the Church. How the separation between orthodox and heretic became so acute, that the expressions of bitterness are famous in the history of controversy, is familiar to all. The spirit of tolerance appeared to be wanting. In fact, according to Westcott, the idea of toleration for personal convictions was utterly unknown to the statesmen of the old world, and found no clear expression in the new world till the seventeenth century. We think the language of modern heresy-hunters extreme, but it is mild compared with the vocabulary of the sainted Irenæus and the self-denying Cyprian.

The first of the heresies and the most important was *Gnosticism*, of which we find dim warning in Paul's letter to the *Colossians*. Gnosticism, a word carrying the meaning of its root, *gnosis*, knowledge,

stood for a higher enlightenment than the average Christian possessed ; and the Gnostic prided himself on belonging to an intellectual aristocracy into which only the educated could enter. The exact nature of these speculations is still in doubt, and is likely to remain so, since the writings of the Gnostics are lost, and we are left to infer their principles from the criticisms of opponents, who had little if any of the sympathy requisite for doing justice to their tenets. But speaking in general, the Gnostic theology was a kind of Christian theosophy, and an attempt to explain Christianity by means of Eastern mythology and the popular philosophies of the world. The two problems which it sought to solve were the existence of evil, and the reconciliation between the finite and Infinite. The world shows the presence of good and evil ; and since God cannot have been the originator of evil, there must needs be some *demiurge*, or evil god, who is accountable for creating matter, which is inherently sinful. Then as regards the revelation of the Infinite, it could only be possible by a process of divine self-limitation. God must have gradually limited Himself till the divine element was sufficiently reduced to permit a revelation to men on earth. Thus many beings were interposed

between God and the world, "angels, powers, words, Mahatmas." As a result of these views concerning evil and the world, there were different extremes of conduct. Their ethical precepts tended either to rigid asceticism or unrestrained licence.

The Gnostics claimed to be truly Christian. They made their appeal to the same Scriptures, traditions, and faith as the orthodox Church; and so widespread was the appearance of manifold aspects of Gnosticism in the second century that it threatened the destruction of the Church, showing the far-reaching influence exercised by pagan thought and speculation on the Gentile belief of that age.¹ But since the orthodox Church required to repel the force of the Gnostic doctrines, the result was that heresy first awakened the Church to the consciousness of its strength. The orthodox Church was compelled to restate its own beliefs, to re-examine its formation, and to realise its own position. As a consequence, the essentials of Christianity and of the New Testament teaching received more attention, resulting in the great improvement in exegesis and philosophic grasp among the Catholic doctors of the third century, over the simpler views of Christian truth held by the apostolic Fathers and the Apologists.

¹ *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, "Irenæus."

It may be more satisfactory to mention the other heresy of the age at this point. If Gnosticism shows us the region where the speculative libertine may revel at his ease, *Montanism* is the rigid home of the ethical and religious ascetic. The prophetic spirit of the Pentecostal time, when Heaven was not far off, and men possessed sufficient spiritual confidence to venture predictions and to claim divine revelations, had all but departed from the Church; and instruction passed through the regular channels of the organised community. Montanism was the reappearance of this old prophetic spirit in an exaggerated form. It arose in Asia Minor, and had as its object of attack the episcopal assumptions, which in their rigidity froze the springs of free individual utterance. About 150 A.D. Montanus, a new convert who seems to have been formerly a heathen priest, made his appearance in Phrygia in the character of an ecstatic prophet, and became the originator of this powerful movement. Inspired prophetesses accompanied him. In the new prophecy of an ecstatic and visionary sort the promises of the Paraclete in the Gospel of John were to be fulfilled. There was to be a final appearance of the Spirit. The immediate proximity of the return of Christ to the heavenly Jerusalem in Phrygia was taught, and a strict ascetic conduct

of life advocated. The main object was to gather communities which would live in expectation of the immediate consummation of all things.

The coarse and wild exaggerations of early Montanism, "that unpitying Phrygian sect," were tamed down very much in the Montanism of Tertullian; but even in him we find the same strong movement towards individual freedom. The teaching of Tertullian might be likened to a union of the modern Holiness movement and Plymouthism. The Christians were looking upon obedience to Church customs as a sufficient ground of salvation, and were inclining to lax manners. Montanism was a recall to a stricter holiness. The pretension of the bishop to peculiar privilege was denied, and the right of forgiving sin, which the bishop claimed, was rejected by the Montanist. The spirit of the apostles, they said, could not be transmitted, for this Spirit is given to the Church. He works in the prophets, especially the newer prophets. Thus the Montanists attacked the constituted authority of the Church, the episcopate; and insisted upon the difference between their times and the early days when everyone had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation.

Estimates of Montanism vary very much: it being regarded by some as primitive Christianity,

and by others as noxious heresy. Sanday balances the case wisely when he says, "Montanism had its high aims and inspirations. Perhaps its best side was its assertion of the independence of the individual Christian against the growing power of a mechanically working hierarchy. But the follies with which it was mixed up weakened its cause; and the consequence of the whole movement was rather to accelerate, by force of reaction, the process which it sought to retard. The *ecclesia spiritus* was to yield to the *ecclesia episcoporum*. . . . Something that was good perished, or at least was driven inwards, with the fall of Montanism. It broke out again—never more, we will hope, to be extinguished—at the Reformation."¹

Having seen the forces that were working within and without the Church, we shall be better able to appreciate the position of Irenæus, who is our leading witness for the period. Upon the banks of the historic Rhone, whose blue waters vie with the grey of the Rhine for the place of honour among rivers, there was in early days a vigorous Christianity. Marseilles had been an active colony for a long time; and its culture, creeping slowly up the Rhone, had brought the gospel with it at some remote time. The church in this place was famed

¹ *Expositor*, 1887.

because of the sincerity of its converts, who proved their faithfulness in numerous persecutions. Gaul became the arena for the conflict between Christianity and the State.¹

At Lyons Irenæus flourished as bishop during the latter part of the second century. Born in Asia Minor or Syria, according to Harnack in 142, his early associations were all with the East, of which he writes: "For while I was yet a boy I saw thee (O Florinus) in Lower Asia with Polycarp. For I have a more vivid recollection of what happened at that time than of recent events: so that I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse: also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John and with the rest of them who had seen the Lord. . . . These things I am continually revolving in my mind by God's grace." As presbyter of Lyons he had been sent to Rome to intercede with the bishop Eleutherus, who had given evidences of too great leniency to Montanism. Some time later he returned as bishop to Rome to participate in the Paschal controversy, when the imperious Victor thought to impose his own will upon the Church. We are ignorant concerning his death. Some claim for him the martyr's crown, in spite of the

¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, v. 1.

fact that nowhere before the fifth century is Irenæus known as a martyr. It is possible that he lived into the third century, and 202 A.D. is a date suggested by good authorities for his death.

He is, to use Hort's words, essentially "the best representative of the last quarter of the second century." The ruling ambition of his episcopate was to uphold the pure gospel of the Church, and to oppose the heretics who abounded along the banks of the Rhone, especially the Valentinian sect, whose tenets he gives in detail. His work entitled *Against Heresies*, or *Refutation and Overthrow of the Gnosis*, was composed between 182 and 188 A.D.

Irenæus has a distinct place in the development of the episcopate. He is the champion of *apostolic succession*, and uses this theory to emphasise the fact that the bishop was the depositary of true doctrine. The differences between heretic and orthodox rendered absolutely necessary some empiric sign which would definitely separate between the two. As yet the Church had been the gathering of saints without official organisation; and when the Gnostic arose to say that his was the original Christianity, it was useless to appeal to the Old Testament, since it was allegorised by all classes; and some Gnostics refused its authority. Equally

vain was it to state that the Holy Spirit guided the Catholic Church; for the Gnostics, and especially the Montanists, would justify their own action by asserting that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. There was therefore a felt demand for an external touchstone to be used by the orthodox Church. This was found in the appeal to apostolic tradition—an authority which both Gnostic and orthodox would admit. If it could be determined what the apostles taught, that would solve all troubles. The cry arose, "Back to the apostles!" The sanction of the early days was sought for in three directions.

1. The apostolic formula of faith, or *creed*. In North Africa, Rome, Gaul, Asia Minor, and perhaps Alexandria, there were baptismal confessions traced to the apostles, which were employed for the instruction of candidates. The so-called Apostles' Creed is the earliest of these. In this way there was introduced a *regula fidei*, or rule of faith, that was held up as a sword against the heretic. It was the kernel around which the teaching of the apostolic times had gathered, and it became the germ of the later development of doctrine.

2. The second appeal was to the apostolic writings, or *canon*. In the formation of the canon the Gnostics had a very large share, since they

compelled the orthodox Church to decide upon its authoritative writings, as they appealed to their own canon as Scripture. In controversy with these heretics the orthodox Church had to decide what books it would accept as genuinely apostolic. Irenæus blames the Valentinians for having more gospels than actually existed ; and he also charges them with wresting texts from their true setting. They resemble, he says, a bungler who, having a mosaic portrait of a king, breaks it up into its parts, and forms of the parts a fox or a dog and claims it is the same as before. The result of this long controversy was that the canon became fixed, Irenæus recognising nearly all the books of the New Testament as we now have them.

3. *Apostolic Succession*.—Since both orthodox and heretic appealed to tradition and to Scripture as their own, a higher court must be found to decide which is the genuine Christianity. Irenæus discovers this in the leading churches of Christendom. Historic congregations have had a continuity in the line of bishops from apostolic times, and this line of descent will furnish a sufficient guarantee for the determination of authenticity. If apostolic formulæ and canon will not avail, then there is apostolic succession. Irenæus writes : "That only which has been handed down from the time of the apostles by

the elders of the Church and publicly and uniformly taught in the Church, that doctrine which at all times, and in every place, may be learned by inquiry from the succession of the apostles in their teaching office, that only is the Christian apostolic truth." Both Tertullian and Irenæus appeal to the uniformity of the Christian tradition held by the leading churches as corresponding to the original unity of teaching in the time of Christ. "Truth can be but one, while each heretical teacher proclaims a different doctrine of his own invention. The churches in Germany have no other faith, no other tradition, than that which is found in Spain, or among the Celts, in the region of the East, in Egypt, and in Syria."

Thus it is that the representatives of genuine apostolic tradition for Irenæus are the bishops of these churches governed by the successors of the apostles. In the episcopate, as the continuation of the apostolic office, he finds the sure pledge of Church doctrine. The episcopate is from this time forward the universal standard and the faithful guardian of the truth as given to the apostles; and none who disobey the commands of the bishop can remain within the Christian fold. This outward visible Church is the medium of salvation. It is "the earthly paradise of the trees of which each may eat,

while heresy has only the forbidden tree of knowledge, whose fruits are death-bearing." If anyone desire initiation into its doctrines, let him yield obedience to the Word as revealed to the bishops, who, sitting in the seat of the apostles, possess the *charisma veritatis*,¹ or gift of truth. "Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles: those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth. But it is also incumbent to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, either as heretics or schismatics." Such was the increased prestige that fell to the bishop as a consequence of the struggle with heresy.

One remark more is in place concerning Irenæus' doctrine of the episcopate. He is no sacerdotalist; he is on the way to becoming such, especially in the matter of transmission of the charism of truth,

¹ "Neither Irenæus nor Tertullian in the earlier writings asserted that the transmission of the *charisma veritatis* to the bishops had really invested them with the apostolic office in its full sense. It is only the later writings of Tertullian which show that the bishop of Rome claimed for his office the full authority of the apostolic office. Both Calixtus and his rival Hippolytus described themselves as successors of the apostles in the full sense of the word" (Harnack).

but the priesthood of all believers is emphatically asserted by him. Priestly absolution is absent, and with the Montanist he holds to the belief in the continuance of the prophetic gift and the near approach of the Kingdom of Christ. It is not until some years later that we pass into sacerdotalism.

In taking a general view of the work of Irenæus, one must admit that the essential position for which he contended was correct, namely, the continuity of the Christian Church and ministry; and that orthodoxy conquered Gnosticism because it possessed a greater measure of the truth. However, it is impossible not to deprecate the weapons which the Church has often employed in its self-defence. It has leaned too often on the supports which were like the broken staff of Egypt; and among these must be placed the doctrine of apostolic succession, which regards him alone as a valid minister who is ordained by the bishop, the successor of the apostle; as if this materialistic descent could produce a spiritual clergy.

The theory of apostolic succession is historically false, since it originated after the close of the apostolic days, as a consequence of the struggle with Gnosticism. If a source for the doctrine were sought for, it would perhaps be discovered in Rabbinism and the later Judaism of the Talmud,

where there are numerous features in common with this later ecclesiastical accretion. In Judaism the laying on of the hands in ordination by the legitimate descendants from the School of Hillel, conferred a grace which marked off its recipient as a new creature different from the layman; and it is possible that this is the historical source of apostolic succession.

However, this doctrine is not only false to history; it is also uncharitable and opposed to the spirit of Christ. Prolific in many forms of clerical assumption that run counter to the words of Jesus, its results have been for evil and not for good. A theory which casts suspicion upon the worth of many labourers who have wrought well for the Kingdom of Heaven, is an outrage on the immortal law of charity, a denial of the impartiality of God, and a gross departure from the spirit of Him who came to tell the world of the brotherhood of all who believe.

CHAPTER IX

CYPRIAN AND SACERDOTALISM

IN our excursions through the leading churches of early Christendom we have so far failed to land upon the third continent known to the world of that day. Asia and Europe have lent their message, but the Dark Continent, as it is now called, has not been visited. Yet the epithet "dark" was scarcely applicable to Africa in the beginning of our era, since men turned with zealous gaze and ardent hope to the culture and learning of that region for a new impulse. Rather was it the bright continent. Strange is it how the light flits from land to land, and those cities which in the formative days were the advanced helpers of the cause of truth, to-day fade into the unknown.

"Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sunshine bright
The man of the bold West now comes array'd:
He of the mystic East is touch'd with night."

At Alexandria, the centre of a brilliant literary

activity, the Church had early taken root, planted, as tradition would have it, by the Apostle Mark; and had grown so large that Emperor Hadrian in 134 A.D. had learnt of the existence of Christians in the city, and knew enough of the details to speak of the bishops of Christ, whom he identifies with the presbyters.

As late as the days of Clement, who died c. 216 A.D., there was no fixed organisation in the Alexandrian Church. "The episcopal office in this Church during the second century gives no presage of the world-wide influence to which, under the prouder name of patriarchate, it was destined in later ages to attain. The Alexandrian succession, in which history is hitherto most interested, is not the succession of the bishops, but of the heads of the catechetical school."¹ Carthage, the other emporium of Libyan culture, has its episcopal history shrouded in darkness; and the Church breaks upon our view with the monarchical bishop in full command.

From these two cities came two men who left a very great impress upon the ecclesiastical life of the next centuries. In Alexandria, amidst the schools of Philosophy, which Kingsley's *Hypatia* has made familiar to modern readers, the first Christian

¹ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 226.

college had reared its structure. This catechetical school, with Pantænus, Clement, and Origen as a trio of illustrious presidents, had fostered the philosophic spirit among the Christians of the place, and was influential in the forwarding of a strong science of religion. This school was the germ-cell of the modern divinity hall. Origen, its most finished ornament, maintained that Christianity grew, as Minerva from Zeus, out of the brain. He, like Augustine sometime later, was averse to the position that Christian truth was an "isolated structure of thought." He looked upon it as the pinnacle of the edifice of past thought. Origen was clearing ground as a mental resting-place for the traveller, who was pursuing knowledge by the way of Christ. His interest was altogether theological.

But while such were the leaders at Alexandria, Carthage was bringing to the front another figure who was to bulk large on the horizon—whose interest in things theological was all but *nil*, and who devoted himself to the purely practical principle of unity or federation in the Church. This was Cyprian. If Origen is doctrinal, Cyprian is governmental. Origen deals in thought, Cyprian in practice.

Perhaps a glance into the home and habits of this man will not be without its value. Carthage

was near to Rome, its rival; and the conflict between the ecclesiastics of these places had much to do in the development of the power of the bishop.¹ So dangerously near Rome was it that Cato had shown the senators a fresh fig pulled two days before in Carthage, as a token that both towns could not excel; and the leaders of the republic had ever felt uneasy at the increase of the city of Hannibal. Of its internal condition very little is known. Benson says: "When Cyprian was there in the height of his repute, Carthage is reported by Herodius to have been in population and wealth the equal of Alexandria and second only to Rome." Here and there from the hidden past there come to us echoes of Christian priests, whose warnings against the pleasures of the populace still reverberate in our ears, though now the porticoes and pleasure gardens stand in silent desolation, a melancholy memorial of a city far gone in love with the goddess of self-indulgence. We see in *De Spectaculis*, Tertullian bemoaning the fact that the heathen looked upon the exquisite enjoyments of ear and eye as quite consistent with profession of religion; and he attempts to solace his fretted spirit with the oft recurrent note of chiliastic hope. "But what are the things which eye hath not seen,

¹ For this sketch I am much indebted to Benson's *Cyprian*.

ear has not heard, and which have not so much as dimly dawned upon the human heart? Whatever they are, they are nobler, I believe, than circus and theatre and racecourse." Augustine refers to Carthage and its "riot of flagitious loves, which swept away even the more sedate." No wonder if religion was a thin veneer. Men acted out with due sobriety religious sentiments which they did not entertain in their hearts as convictions. Religion was a series of *tableaux*, something to be admired, acted, not felt. "All society was pervaded by a sense of the unreality of God."¹

As to its aristocracy, Carthage was a forerunner of Edinburgh, where the advocates lead off in the march of social rank. Oratory had the first place among the arts; schools of Rhetoric where Latin was the facile instrument, suffered no rival except Rome itself. Law and oratory were her stock-in-trade. She had produced no philosophy.

How and when Christianity, a wave of that sea "which heals all human ills," first struck Carthage is a mystery. It was as the slow stealing of the tide upon the marshes at dawn. All that the Carthaginians knew was that some fresh strength had entered into their weakness. "The Christians had, in fact, come into possession, as the Phœnicians

¹ Benson.

themselves had come into possession of harbours and marts, not like the noisy Roman colonies, but without violence or observation.”¹

In this atmosphere probably Cyprian was born, a true child of the Carthage spirit, and a child of whom any city might justly be proud. Gibbon, who cannot be condemned for partiality to clerics, admits that “he possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, and provoke the suspicions and resentment of the pagan magistrates.”²

Cyprian's training also was a very suitable one for the duties he was afterwards to fulfil, since for the work of organisation a peculiar preparation is requisite. In the governments of to-day lawyers are sent to Parliament, as they know the technicalities of law, and how to make law operative. It is accordingly not wonderful to find that in the formation of Church government lawyers took a leading part. Catechetical schools suffice for the philosopher and theologian; but the Platonic ideal of philosophers being kings is not of the earth earthy. We are therefore not surprised to learn that Carthage, famed for its advocates, should also be the home-centre of Christian law. The Church jurist was by right a product of North

¹ Benson, xxxvii.

² Gibbon, ii. 34.

Africa. Here law had been practised by Tertullian, whom Cyprian names his master ; and he never set out to journey from city to city without one of his books, for which he would call, saying, "Give me my master," meaning Tertullian. Then there was Minucius Felix, who gave Christian thought its earliest clothing of Latinity, of whom Dean Milman writes, "Perhaps no late work, either Christian or pagan, reminds us of the golden days of Latin prose so much as the *Octavius*." This man was probably a juris-consult from North Africa.¹

Cyprian also was an advocate and teacher of rhetoric—the very flower of his profession. His worldly position was excellent, for he was the owner of large gardens and estates ; and it is no wonder that he soon gathered many around him, while he had the ability to influence those whom he attracted. He was so influential with prince and nobleman, that when he left their ranks to join the Christians, it was considered a great gain for the Church. Jerome, in selecting an example of the triumph of Christianity over the literary world,

¹ To these three men, Tertullian, Felix, and Cyprian, lawyers all, and all from North Africa, the Church is indebted for its language. The Roman Church had little to do with the introduction of Latin as the language of Christian thought. Its members were mostly Greek, and Greek was the language of its transactions. It is to Carthage that we look for the linguistic change.

fastens on this great Carthaginian master. Even to the last Cyprian's friendship was valued by the heathen aristocracy, so gentle, so learned, so elegant, so brilliant was he.¹ Cyprian's conversion seems to have been complete. He speaks of it in a letter wherein he contrasts his pagan and Christian mode of life. "I seconded my own besetting vices. I despaired of improvement. I looked on my faults as natural and home-born. I even favoured them. But so soon as the stain of my former life was wiped away by help of the birth-giving wave, and a calm pure light from above flooded my purged heart: so soon as I drank of the Spirit from heaven and was restored to new manhood, then marvellously doubts began to clear: secrets revealed themselves: the dark grew light, seeming difficulties gave way." Immediately after his baptism he was elected a deacon; and in 247 A.D. was raised to the office of presbyter. After the passing of a year he was chosen bishop, but only yielded to the persuasions of the people when they had surrounded his house and forced the honour upon him. From this time he ruled the see of Carthage in the face of a strong and persistent opposition, until, when ten years of trouble had gone by, he suffered the martyr's death in September, 258.

¹ Hauck, *Realencyklopädie*, iv. p. 369.

It is a matter of dispute between the advocates of different views of the episcopate, how much importance is to be attributed to external events in the growth of the Church doctrine associated with Cyprian. Some assert that the practice in each case outran the doctrine, and that theory came lagging after, as the clap of thunder follows on the electric flash. This is the contention of Otto Ritschl in his *Cyprian von Karthago*, published in 1885. He maintains that Cyprian is of significance not only because of his doctrine of Church unity, but also for his share in the creation of that which led to the doctrine. He does not believe that the unity of the Church was an independent thought that influenced the men of the period because of its theoretic interest; but he holds that the position of the bishop produced the theory of the unity of the Church, which must be put down as a result of the episcopate. As formerly heretics were excluded from the Church because of their corrupt faith, so now schismatics are to be excommunicated because they will not submit unto the bishop. Schism leads to a closer drawing of the cords of clericalism. Ritschl holds that Cyprian's theory of Church unity is a consequence of the struggles of the time, emerging as a new product out of the conquests of the period. As some new polity arises in a nation

that is cast upon new problems, so this doctrine of later Catholicism is the consequence of emergencies in the Church. He says: "Neither in the writings before his great work on the *Unity of the Church*, nor before his 43rd epistle, do we find the idea of Church unity expressed. Only after this 43rd letter does this become prominent; and this subsequent expansion of Church theory is the result of the events of the time. The practice which Cyprian followed was often in advance of the theory."¹ Harnack coincides with Ritschl when he writes: "It was only with slowness and hesitation that the theories of the Church followed the actual changes in her history. It may be said that the idea of the Church always remained a stage behind the condition reached in practice. Cyprian's view of the Church is the result of the conflicts through which he passed."²

On the other hand, the advocates of Episcopacy seek to eliminate as far as possible the influence that came from environment. They will grant that no man is independent of his time, and that the greatest must take some tone from his surroundings; but they assert that the main stream of episcopal doctrine is very different from the rivers of Tartarus, which contracted the colour of the land through

¹ Ritschl, p. 5.

² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ii. p. 85.

which they flowed. These claim that the doctrine of the Church was pure and fresh from the apostolic source. Thus Benson says that "Cyprian's idea of the Church was a legitimate development of the principles of the apostolic Church parallel with and analogous to the growing light on cardinal truths." He holds that the idea of the Church was far from being an expanding one. It was no product of opportunism, emergency, or policy; but the doctrine is found in its completest form in the earliest letter. "The whole period of Cyprian's episcopate added nothing to the distinctness with which he realised it, although his discussions and his '*visions*' reflected and impressed it. There is no room for the hypothesis that the exigencies of his position towards the Novatianists, towards his own presbyters, or towards the see of Rome, determined or in the least developed his belief."¹

We find ourselves here in the secure, if unromantic, *via media*. It is necessary to suppose that the theory of Cyprian was influenced by the events of his time, but this is not inconsistent with the belief that he was developing principles which had long been in process of growth. Church organisation is like a garment which has to be adapted to the different phases of climate, but the garment has

¹ Benson, p. 39.

always to be cut according to more or less fixed principles. Cyprian's theory of the Church is only possible because of the history that preceded him though the new turn of events has modified many of the details. He who only regards the differences is apt to lay a false emphasis upon the novelty of Cyprian. Such an one studies history as a series of varying kaleidoscopic scenes, and fails to observe the continuity. Another, who has no eye for what is new, looks too exclusively at the similarities between Cyprian and the earlier times. He studies history in its larger movements, and fails to make allowance for the perpetually changing details. Circumstances most assuredly had their part in the shaping of the newer doctrine of the Church in the third century, and some outline of these is essential.

Shortly after the appointment of Cyprian to the see of Carthage, the Decian persecution broke out, and very naturally the severest weight fell on the public representative of the community, against whom the cry of the people was loud, "Cyprian to the lions!"¹ For the sake of government, not out of cowardice, as after events proved, Cyprian withdrew into retirement, in doing which, his presbyters said, he acted quite rightly, "because he is a person of

¹ *Ep.* 55.

eminence, and because a conflict is impending." The martyr spirit soon grew popular. Gratitude to those who had sacrificed their safety and comfort to the Church knew no bounds. Men prayed all night upon the ground that they might themselves be captured, so as to attend on those who had been tortured. These were regarded as the jewels of the Church, and all honour was ascribed to them. But along with the martyrs and confessors was the other class, dishonoured tarnished jewels, those who in the trial of faith had denied the Lord, winning earthly ease at the expense of their conscience. These were called the lapsed, and ere long, with the great increase of their numbers, they became the lapsed masses.

Thus far there had been no concession made to this class, who had fallen away into idolatry. But from an entirely innocent cause martyrs began to ask that, out of deference to their wishes, some lapsed brother might be taken back at the bishop's good pleasure into the communion of the Church and allowed the sacrament; and there entered the practice of substitution, or vicarious salvation, one man's goodness atoning for another's sin. Soon this increased, and the petition of the martyr became a very formidable affair in the Church. The spirit displayed in the indulgences of later days showed

itself; and this led to abuses which became so extensive, that a martyr would give a certificate whereby a certain person and his friends might be restored to the Church, and this without any confession of sorrow and without discipline. In Carthage the small clerical party that had opposed Cyprian at the time of his appointment, saw in this practice a good lever to force their bishop out of position. But the bishop, recognising how things were tending, and that it would end in the complete destruction of all authority in the Church, writes to the church at Rome, telling them his difficulty and asking what they are in the habit of doing. The proposal of Cyprian is to reserve the cases of the lapsed intact, whether the martyr had given the Letters of Peace or not, until councils of bishops assembling both at Carthage and Rome, should lay down principles of restoration, the cases to be heard individually by the bishops, with the help of the presbyters and deacons.

In the meantime, at Carthage a certain Felicissimus, a deacon, had, in opposition to Cyprian's wish, readmitted multitudes to the privileges of the Church, so that he became an apostle of laxity. This Felicissimus was the tool of Novatus, who was the real leader of the lax party in Carthage. At the same time Novatian was coming into the

foreground at Rome. He was a stern man, hard of heart and unflinching in spirit, and opposed to any leniency. He refused to readmit any of the lapsed upon any condition. He was the apostle of puritanism. Strange to tell, these two apostles of laxity and puritanism combined to form the so-called heresy or schism of *Novatianism*, which continued in some form until the sixth century.

The Decian persecution having ceased, the council of Carthage proposed by Cyprian was called April, 250 A.D. Rome had chosen as its bishop Cornelius, but at the same time the puritan party had ordained Novatian as bishop, and the peculiar spectacle of two bishops in one see revealed itself to the council; and although the council at Carthage consisted of the bishops from North Africa, it was yet compelled to recognise the validity of either one or the other of these Roman bishops. In Carthage as well two bishops, Fortunatus and Maximus, had been set up in opposition to Cyprian, so that the council had to deal with the authentic warrant of the episcopal office.

Under these circumstances the treatise of Cyprian on the *Unity of the Catholic Church* was delivered as a tract for the times. It was the first Christian writing on Church government, and

almost synchronised with the *De Principiis* of Origen, which had broken a path in systematic theology. The work of Cyprian was the offspring of the controversy outlined above, and its pages are warm with the heat of argument, forged as it was out of the struggles of contending parties. The writing has been tampered with by Roman hands in the interest of the see of Rome and the primacy of Peter, but these interpolations are easily recognised, and generally admitted to be spurious. The opening sentence is as follows: "Since the Lord warns us, saying, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' and since He bids us to be simple to harmlessness, and yet with due simplicity to be prudent, what else, beloved brethren, befits us, than to use foresight and watching with an anxious heart, both to perceive and to beware of the wiles of the crafty foe, that we, who have put on Christ, the wisdom of God the Father, may not seem to be wanting in wisdom in the matter of providing for our salvation? For it is not persecution alone that is to be feared. Caution is more easy where danger is manifest, and the mind is prepared beforehand for the contest, when the adversary avows himself. The enemy is more to be feared and to be guarded against when he creeps on us secretly; when deceiving by the appearance of peace, he steals forward by hidden

approaches, whence also he has received the name of serpent."

Cyprian placed the unity of the Church in the united episcopate, and communion with the external Church as essential to salvation. This external Church had the right of exercising supreme governmental functions, and it was decided that no bishop, once duly ordained, was to have his position questioned.¹

"Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power ; but the beginning proceeded from unity. And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided. The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun, but one light : many branches of a tree, but one strength, based in its tenacious root ; thus also the Church is one. He who breaks the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ ; he who gathereth elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the

¹ *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, i. 745.

Church of Christ He cannot possess the garment of Christ who parts and divides the Church of Christ."

From this time forward in the West the theory of the Church which overshadows all others is the Cyprianic ideal. The Church based on the bishops, the successors of the apostles, the vicegerents of God, is the Spouse of Christ, the garment of Christ, His seamless coat.

The conception is no doubt partially the result of the conflict with Novatian. The desire of excluding those who were orthodox Christians, as far as the faith was concerned, but were independent in their action, induced the bishops to decide that all who did not accept the words of the regularly constituted bishop were to be regarded as without the Church. Novatianism must be excluded. Those who had separated themselves from the majority of the Christians as guided by the bishop were heretical; and at a later period in his life Cyprian would not recognise even the baptism of such heretics. The unity of the Church is thus a unity of the bishops, who are the heirs of all the apostolic graces; and the sacrament of unity is the federation of those churches whose bishops meet in council.

However, Cyprian's theory had been impossible

were it not for the ineradicable conviction that existed among Christians of the unity of the Church, a conviction which had descended from the apostolic age. This unity of the Church had ever been a loved belief of the faithful, and although its expression was not so formal as it now became, there had been a very real fellowship of the different members of the brotherhood. The friendly federation between the churches was a cause of continuous growth, and churches which fell out of this friendly relationship with the rest of the brotherhood soon lapsed into insignificance. The churches of farther Asia Minor, for example, were at the commencement of the second century among the best equipped and most prosperous of all; and yet by the middle of the third century they have so passed into the dark that scarcely a record remains to tell that once there had been a church in these regions. Zahn suggests as a most reasonable cause for this sudden change, that the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna maintained their own private theory on the Easter festival, and thus cut themselves loose from the united practice of the whole Church. Provincial self-isolation resulted in the decline of these communities which were outside of the general ecclesiastical intercourse.¹

¹ Zahn, *Skizzen*, p. 40.

Cyprian's theory, modified indeed by contemporary events, had its roots in the preceding history. The unity that at first had been quite informal now assumed fixed external supports, and a sole authority and a bond of union were found in the united episcopate. The Ignatian system, according to which the bishop is a congregational official, merges into the Cyprianic system, in which the bishops, as leaders of large communities, are to be considered "as the foundation of the one Church. Each of these prelates, however, provided he keep within the association of the bishops, preserves the independent right of regulating the circumstances of his own diocese."¹

One other fact concerning Cyprian requires mention. He introduced *Sacerdotalism* into the Church. To quote Lightfoot: "As Cyprian crowned the edifice of episcopal power, so also was he the first to put forward, without relief or disguise, these sacerdotal assumptions: and so uncompromising was the tone in which he asserted them, that nothing was left to his successors but to enforce his principles and to reiterate his language."² In Clement's letters to Corinth there had been a comparison made between the Church authorities

¹ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ii. p. 87.

² Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 258.

and the priests, and in the *Didaché* the prophets were likened to the high priest; but this language was figurative. Ignatius and Irenæus and Tertullian speak of the priesthood of the clergy, but it is not in opposition to the universal priesthood of the whole community. With Cyprian, however, the priestly control is in full blast. Schismatics are without the sacerdotal grace or order, whereas the bishops are God's priests, who attend the altar, make authorised prayers, and offer true sacrifices. All the privileges of the Old Testament priest are accorded them. The word *sacerdos* is found again and again as a regular term for a bishop or presbyter. The sacrament that is not their sacrament is invalid; the priest alone can dispense grace. In a word, the system of priestcraft enters with all its accompaniment of evil. It seems probable that this was due in part to the pagan surroundings, where the mystagogue of heathenism had so much prominence; but while it came from a Greek or Roman source, it was fostered by appeal to the Scriptures. The terminology of the Old Testament was taken over into the Church to give support to the extravagances of the system.

Thus it was that from this man Cyprian, whose personal character and ideals none would desire to question, there came the strongest impetus to a

system which was to prove the bane of true religion, and to limit for many a long year the influences of Him whose gospel is one of free grace and free access into the Divine Presence. Not infrequently is the good man the innocent cause of evil.

At this point we conclude the present study of the episcopate, since Cyprian closes one great movement; and it is not within our purpose to discuss in detail the further progress of Church organisation. One can, however, easily see how naturally things are shaping themselves towards the coming change. As in the single community the monarchical bishop gained his place of authority, and assumed more and more of the divine prerogatives, so in the community of bishops or united episcopate, the same tendency towards monarchicalism must show itself, and episcopacy naturally passes into the papacy. The predominant note of monarchical unity in a visible authority must be struck in the larger federation, and the *episcopus episcoporum*, or *Pope* will be the logical issue of the situation. To discuss how Rome fell heir to this throne, and how the pope came to be regarded as the one authority for the whole Church, the vicegerent of God on earth, is not at present within our province.

CHAPTER X

THE HIGHER UNITY

BY way of recapitulation, the following conclusions seem to be justified by our study:—(1) There are no manifest evidences of the initiation by Christ or His disciples of a threefold ministry, having the single bishop as president. (2) There is no prescribed form of Church organisation in the different communities of New Testament times.¹ (3) Towards the early part of the second century the Ignatian epistles introduce to us the monarchical bishop, who resembles the minister of our day more than the modern bishop. (4) By 150 A.D. this form of Church government had become almost universal. (5) With the third century episcopal organisation has sought and found the support of sacerdotalism.

Thus is it that the rise of the episcopate, the

¹ Professor Lindsay claims that there are five types of primitive Church organisation in N.T. ; cf. *Critical Review*, viii. 189.

most important organisation of the early Church, can be traced as a human institution, issuing from the circumstances of the period, and as the consequence of the activity of the Church leaders of the day. The course of Church organisation might be likened to a river, which at its glacier source is a system of streamlets so small that one can leap from bank to bank, but which rapidly gathering volume, becomes a mighty torrent, forcing its way despite every obstruction. The streams of Church administration have become united in so large a system by the third century, that henceforth the *administrative* office assumes increasing significance, until the duties of government eclipse all other offices of the bishop.

Allen calls attention to the two different functions that are ever present in religious communities.¹ One is the function of *preaching*, and is concerned with the personal life of the hearer. The preacher seeks to enter the heart and touch the emotions of his audience, so that thereby he may arouse men from the inevitable lethargy of spirit. In Old Testament life this duty was in the hands of the prophet, who represented the living Word of God on earth, and was free from the restraint of king or school. The other is the function of *administra-*

¹ Allen, *Christian Institutions*.

tion, which occupies itself with what is more practical, order and unity and conduct. This corresponds to kingship in the Old Testament. Now these two functions went side by side in the early Church, and the liberty of the preacher was universally acknowledged, until, with the growth of the episcopal system, the executive function of government cast that of preaching into the shade, and the first thoughts of the Church came to be concentrated on questions of administration. The Church began to look with envious eyes upon the temporal thrones of the world. Around her were weakened institutions whose best days were in the past; and the hearts of men, ever anxious for the support of something tangible, challenged the Church to occupy the seat of the disinherited mighty. Nor was the Church slow to take advantage of her opportunity. The see of Rome, which had begun to represent the whole Church, saw quite early how much might be gained by cultivating a likeness to the imperial throne. "Even before the Empire of the West had fallen, St. Leo the Great could boast that to Rome, exalted by the preaching of the chief apostles to be a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal city, there had been appointed a spiritual dominion wider than her earthly sway. In 476

A.D. Rome ceased to be the political capital of the Western countries, and the papacy, inheriting no small part of the emperor's power, drew to herself the reverence which the name of the city still commanded, until by the middle of the eighth or, at latest, of the ninth century she had perfected in theory a scheme which made her the exact counterpart of the departed despotism, the centre of the hierarchy, absolute mistress of the Christian world."¹

In the famous Donation of Constantine, that stupendous forgery which influenced the world for many centuries, the prevalent argument is that there is a close parallel between the civil and the religious, so that each officer in the State has his counterpart in the Church. The Church more and more emphasised this function of government; and by arrogating to herself the arm of civil law, entered in the mediæval age upon the arena of a prolonged struggle for power.

This feature of mediæval ecclesiasticism so impressed itself upon Tennyson that he selected for dramatic treatment the character of Becket, who, when transferred from the office of Chancellor to that of Archbishop, underwent a change of attitude,

¹ Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 99.

abandoning his friendship for the king, and becoming the prelate in quest of power.

“ I served King Henry well as Chancellor :
I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
And all the heap'd experience of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury—
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes.”

The Church had become a second State. She was now a court for legislation and administration, and for dispensing judgment. Her unity was a unity of cultus and ceremony, and the legal constitutions of Christian communities were drawn upon the model of State documents. The Roman Communion, as Dorner says, converted its polity into a dogma. In this way, setting her eyes on the watch for supremacy, the Church added continually to the lustre of her earthly pomp until the time came when none dared brook her displeasure. The monarchy of the Church was transformed into a tyranny, with the chief bishop or pope as tyrant. Rome dominated the civilised world, and emperor had to take a second place in the councils of State,

The Reformation was a protest against this false usurpation of Roman Catholicism. The assumptions of the bishop had annoyed the world past endurance, and the Reformers made ready to rebel against the tyranny. Not that they had any unreasonable prejudice against the episcopate or even the papacy. It is said that "Melanchthon and, to a certain extent, Luther had no objection to the episcopate, as exercising a function of supervision over the churches, if it could have been based upon human right, *juro humano*, and not *jure divino*. But Melanchthon went further, and would not have objected to the papacy if the office could have been regarded as one created by the suffrages of the Christian people."¹

The Reformers believed that the episcopate had no direct support from apostolic times, and was not to be regarded as coextensive with the Church. They would have accepted it as a useful product of the wisdom of the centuries; but since those within the fold would not yield to their contention, the Reformers left the bosom of Roman Catholicism, and broke the chain of servitude.

This was the first gift of the Reformation, that it freed the world from bondage to form. Organisation had come to be master instead of servant,

¹ Allen, p. 253.

and the concomitant evils had grown so numerous that the sole escape lay in the denial of its authority. No administration deserved such prominence as had been given it, and the Reformed Churches therefore refused to lay much stress on the question of organisation or government. Breaking loose from the institutional ideal of the mediæval Church, they did not begin by establishing a rival institution. And in this the Reformers did what is worthy of our approval. They saw more clearly than ever before that the form or letter was of secondary importance compared with the spirit, whereas the framers of the Roman Catholic Church had in their search for union not been able to conceive of any unity that did not take visible shape. They identified the Kingdom of God with an organised corporation; and the more imposing this ecclesiastical structure became, the more ready were people to bow down before it.

The lesson to be drawn from the mediæval Church, when the episcopate, with its culmination in the papacy, had full sway, is that we must not again look to a visible organisation as the instrument of union. For the time this ideal of Church unity served its end, acting like the covering that surrounds some flickering light, which in the gusts of wind may be in danger of extinction. But this

protecting glass, this ecclesiastical guard of the truth, became increasingly bedimmed with the accretions of the ages, till in time the truth was all but lost to view. Happily we in these latter days have fallen on times of fuller liberty, when the light need not glimmer darkly through an artificial covering. Never again can the question of organisation assume the significance which once it had allotted to it.

The feeling for unity is as intense to-day as it has ever been, and the desire of order as strong. Without form there will be no continuity of life, the stream must have its channel to guide its progress; but the unity of the future will not have as its essential a uniform administration. Men are more able to regard the ideal without dragging it in the earth; and the trained eye of the opening twentieth century is able to behold the idea as the idea. The days when men made concrete the love of God in the image of the Madonna, when the Holy Grail with its mystic cup was the substitute for the Holy Spirit, when the sacrifice of Christ might be seen in the bread and wine, and when the Kingdom of God was a rigid system of organisation, are gone. Men are learning to gaze upon the pure light.

Things are shaping themselves towards the higher union that exists in the presence of diversity. National life is accustoming the world to the fact

that diversity of governments does not exclude a substantial union of peoples ; and there is always a reflex play of national ideals upon the Church. To-day broad and generous aims are entering into the minds of the statesmen of the world, whereby, beyond the form of the national administration which each people regards as best suited for its self-expression, there goes floating, and that not far from the earth, the ideal of a true union, for the sake of peace and the brotherhood of all men. The Church of to-day, with the same intense love of union that Ignatius and Irenæus and Cyprian had, must not look with jealous eye towards the organised unity of the pre-Reformation time. No form of government must be regarded as co-extensive with the Church. But while each Church finds its life best expressed in its own system, it should seek to cherish an all-pervading hope for a unity of love and faith and hope, a unity of the Spirit, by means of which all denominations are regarded as constituent parts of a united Christendom. For if there is to be a harmonious agreement, this must be preceded by the abandonment on the part of all of any attitude of superiority because of age or prestige. The Reformed Churches have now become too large to be regarded as a schism from the Catholic Church, as Nonconformity is too

extensive to be treated as a schism from the Church of England. Doubtless there is an increasing breadth of sympathy towards other denominations shown by the best representatives of the Episcopal Churches, which in its eirenical tendency is worthy of admiration; but their proposals for federation appear to have the implied condition that union must include a return to the rule of the bishop. Even so generous a scholar as Sanday points to this as a way out of the present division. He writes: "As the growing study of history among them (Nonconformists) extends and deepens, they will, I believe, further come to see that the episcopal organisation was the rule of the Church for fifteen centuries, that in practice it has many recommendations, and that the reasons for which in the sixteenth century it was thrown over were insufficient. They might come in the end to reach hands to those of us who hold that although Episcopacy is not of divine right, it is yet the normal order, a sound link in the chain which binds us to the great Church of the past."¹

But it is hopeless to fancy that this condition of union will be accepted by the non-episcopal churches, not because there is an absence of desire on their part for corporate federation, nor because

¹ *The Conception of Priesthood*, p. 98.

there is an inveterate dislike to the episcopal system as such, the advantages of which may be freely admitted ; but because the approach is made along the way where the other Churches cannot go. If the movement towards union commences with the implied assumption that the episcopal organisation is necessary, then this at once introduces a discussion on the merits of the different systems of government ; for the non-episcopal churches have no fault to find with the working efficiency of their own forms of rule. The New Testament, in its account of the principles that guided the primitive community, sufficiently supports, and the success of these latter ages has amply justified, their Church orders. The progress of these Churches since the reforming days is not such as to create the impression among those who have well trained historic minds, that the departure from the episcopal organisation brought a decline in strength and spirituality. Indeed, to place any organisation as a preliminary term of union is to offer an ultimatum that ensures rejection. The thoughts of the Churches should be kept upon the spiritual verities of the faith. The vision must be directed to that higher sphere, where the truest co-operation is possible, upon scholarship and moral efforts, upon the evangelisation of the world and the

defence of true doctrine; and then the charity fostered by these divine unities will develop a spirit that will be ready to abandon all that is non-essential, and which will not keep any conditions in reserve concerning a particular form that must needs be adopted.

In the study of the episcopate we have frequently touched on the subject of *Sacerdotalism*. We have seen how the sacerdotal element became prominent under Cyprian. From this date it continued to develop as weeds do on a hot summer day. The priesthood of the clergy as a specialised class, distinct from and superior to the laity, became a fundamental axiom of the Mediæval Church. The sacrificial system rendered indispensable a priest, who became the intermediary between God and man; for the Lord's Supper was represented as a sacrifice made by priest for people. It was in this new and unscriptural view of the Supper that the evil of Sacerdotalism took its rise. The Eucharist was called a "*verum et proprium sacrificium*" and "*vere propitiatorium* alike for the remission of sins of every kind on earth and for souls in purgatory not yet fully purged or expiated." It was held that no one could doubt that the priesthood was the foundation of the entire Christian religion. This priesthood of the clergy

tended to eliminate the sense of responsibility from the people; and the performance of the mass by the priest was so extended beyond the reach of those who were attending the service, that by degrees the personal presence of believers was not regarded as indispensable. The most crass conceptions associated themselves with the sacrifice. The magic of heathenism found entry. The priestly order, by means of its weapons of absolution and excommunication, came to exercise a kingly authority, which was augmented by the institution in 1215 A.D. of Auricular Confession.

Again the Reformers protested. The indulgences and abuses of Tetzels were the match to set the fire, and the Reformation performed its second great work for the world. Having freed the individual from bondage to a high ecclesiastical tyranny, it now freed him from the spiritual tyranny of the priest who kept control of the approach to God. From this time forward free access was claimed by the Reformers for all into the Divine Presence.

In view of the abuses of the sacerdotal order we can well understand the antipathy for the name *priest*, so that even writers of the Anglican communion, which retained the word, confessed to the danger of its employment. Thus Hooker:

"Wherefore to pass by the name, let them use what dialect they will, whether we call it a Priesthood, a Presbytership, or a Ministry, it skilleth not ; although in truth the word *Presbyter* does seem more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable than Priest, with the drift of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ." So also Lightfoot : " If, therefore, the sacerdotal office be understood to imply the offering of sacrifices, the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves no place for a Christian priesthood . . . and it might have been better if the later Christian vocabulary had conformed to the silence of the apostolic wishes, so that the possibility of confusion would have been avoided."

Notwithstanding this, there are those to-day who regard the action of the Reformers in denying the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, and the priesthood of the clergy, as ultra - Protestant ; as, for example, Moberly in his *Ministerial Priesthood*. It is true that in doing this Moberly gives new significance to the word *sacrifice*, and consequently to the word *priest*. He teaches that Christ while on earth began the sacrifice of self to the will of God, which had its fullest expression at the time of His death. Sacrifice is, he says, love within the sphere of sin, suffering, and dying ; and Christ, in that He made this offer of love in sacrifice, is the priest.

His eternal devotion to the will of the Father is His eternal sacrifice. The priesthood in Christ is divine love under conditions of humanity. But what Christ is, that the Church is; and since Christ is the priest, the Church is priestly. This priestly function is externalised in the Eucharist, which is the only ceremonial in connection with the Church of Christ. The priesthood of the ministry follows from the priesthood of the Church. They are priests because they are personally consecrated to be the representatives and active organs of the priesthood of the Church, and the personal relation to the priestliness of the Church is something which has been conferred on the minister once and for all. He is a representative *persona*. He is always called to realise the characteristic priestliness of the Church.

This is very beautiful as a theory, and contains much that is in accordance with universal Christian teaching; for it is undoubtedly a fact that the ministry is called to such acts of sacrifice. But it is difficult to escape the impression that this new philosophy of sacerdotalism is very illusive. It is a flag of truce hiding an ambush. These defenders of sacerdotalism insist with a laudable emphasis upon the universal priesthood of believers,¹ under

¹ Moberly, p. 258.

which, however, is concealed the doctrine concerning a clergy that is the representative organ of the Church, receiving power not by original derivation from the body, but by perpetual external succession from an apostolic source.¹ Again, they assert that the outward element in worship is of small value compared with the inward: "it is but the shell or body or symbolic expression of the mind"; and we are prepared to believe that the materialistic danger will be dispelled in this strongly ethical atmosphere. But we ere long are introduced to a place where the air thickens, and the Lord's Supper, as the culmination of the Christian life, is treated as a sacrifice to be offered by a priest.² The same holds true in regard to the manner in which the pastoral function of the clergy is insisted upon; though the spiritual beauty with which this is expanded by High Church writers is seriously diminished when it is discovered that this beautiful garb of a self-denying pastorate conceals the dreaded sacerdotal function. With one hand the evils are renounced, only to be reclaimed by the other.

In opposition to this defence of Sacerdotalism we would note, that a specialised priesthood of a class is not compatible with the universal priesthood of

¹ Moberly, p. 20.

² *Ibid.* p. 261.

all believers. It is not easy to understand how the clergy, as a select band, can be called the representative organ of the Church, when they are elected by an exceedingly small section of the Church, in accordance with a fixed principle of apostolic succession, to duties which are confessedly not the prerogatives of all the members of the Church. Representative government does not rest on principles such as these, and is antagonistic to sacerdotalism, which in its real inwardness means that the gifts of grace are dependent for their efficacy upon a class of men who keep this grace within their own circle. This so-called representation is in fact a substitution, by which the clergy eventually will perform spiritual and ethical duties in the stead of the laity, with the inevitable result that a higher standard of saintliness is set for this priestly class than for the unordained members of the Church.

In addition, sacerdotal language is absent from the New Testament. It is true that in some places occasional use is made in the New Testament of the priestly language of the old Covenant; but is it more than figurative? Here we take direct issue by asking, Is there any external act of a sacrificial nature depending for its validity, as a part of the original sacraments of the Church of Christ, on a

priestly ministry? The sacerdotalists affirm that such a sacrifice is found in the offering up of the Eucharist. Our answer to this question, as a direct negative, will be evident from the preceding discussion, in which we have seen that the New Testament never regards the Eucharist as a ritual sacrifice, invalid unless performed on an altar by a priest.¹ Paul in the letter to the Romans recommends his readers to offer their *bodies* a living sacrifice, and represents himself as a priest offering sacrifices to God, where the offering is the *Gentiles*;² but in none of the New Testament writings is there any evidence to prove the close kinship between Eucharist and sacrifice. Moberly admits that this is a weak point in the defence of sacerdotalism: "Now I shall admit that in the words of Scripture, both the connexion of Christian ministry with Eucharistic leadership and the application to Eucharistic worship of sacrificial and priestly language, is less explicit than we might perhaps at first sight have expected."³ He explains this by two reasons. "First and foremost. Christian life and Christian worship are essentially spiritual.

¹ Chapter II.

² "St. Paul is standing at the altar as priest of the gospel, and the offering which he makes is the Gentile Church" (Sanday and Headlam on *Romans*, xv. 16).

³ Moberly, p. 264.

Any approach to very strong insistence, in the Scripture itself, upon the means, as such, would almost inevitably have resulted in an exaggeration of the intrinsic sanctity of what was outward and mechanical." "The second reason is this that both Acts and Epistles were written at a time when sacrificial and priestly language were *de facto* identified with the symbolic, ceremonial, and unreal priesthood and sacrifices of the Mosaic Law. To have simply taken over the language while the temple was standing would have led to inextricable misunderstanding and confusion."¹ In regard to the first reason, it is pertinent to observe that, if there were such perils in the materialising tendency of priestly language for those remote days, there is no reason to conclude that the danger has in any way diminished in our time. Is it not, therefore, more reasonable to suppose that the omission of such terminology from the New Testament was intentional and meant for perpetual observance? The second argument, drawn from the existence of the temple and its ceremonial, loses its weight when we consider that where the silence is broken, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the language is not sacerdotal. The writer of this letter is at pains to make use of all the types of Old Testament

¹ Moberly, p. 265.

sacrifice and priesthood ; not, however, for the sake of initiating a new system of ceremonial, but in order to insist upon it that the old order has vanished and that we now live in an atmosphere that is ethical and spiritual. He is addressing sacerdotalists, and assures them that their desires after a ritual similar to the former age are earthly and unchristian. Christ is the High Priest, who offered up Himself once for all, and now all may come with boldness to the throne of grace, bringing nothing but a loving faith and an eager desire after His truth. While the New Testament employs metaphor drawn from the Mosaic law, it never introduces sacerdotalism.

This defence of sacerdotalism is again at fault, in that it places a new and unusual meaning upon the words sacrifice and priest. It appears to confuse sacrifice with self-sacrifice, whereas there is a vast distinction in the common acceptance of the terms. Self-sacrifice is an act of the spiritual nature that issues from the secret recesses of man's being, and which does not become an objective fountain of merit for others. Sacrifice usually means a material offering external to the person and supposed to bear atoning value. Now when we speak of the priest offering sacrifice, the only meaning that can be fairly attached to the word

is the second of these; and it is because sacrifice has been almost everywhere employed in this sense that sacerdotalism is to be regarded with such jealous suspicion. It cannot be said that the priest offers a sacrifice such as that which Christ offered. There is peculiar emphasis in the statement that Christ offered up Himself once for all a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice. No minister can ever repeat the great act that was performed by the Saviour for the remission of sins. It is a confusion in language to regard the self-sacrificing devotion of the minister as a priestly act parallel to the sacrifice made by Christ. And more than this, the tendency to liken the priestly sacrifices of the Church to the sacrificial work of Christ comes perilously near to a depreciation of the atoning merit of the death of the Son of God. Besides, the minister in his self-sacrifice is not differentiated from the ordinary believer, since upon all Christians, lay and clerical, is placed the injunction, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Me." If priestly function belongs to the clergy in the sense employed by Moberly, then the argument is simply an additional proof of the priesthood of all believers.

Sacerdotalism is materialistic, and it is impossible to idealise materialism, as this philosophy

attempts to do. The crass element may be much refined and diminished, but hieratic theories never can escape from the charge of laying an undue emphasis on the physical. Finely-spun webs of definition do not conceal that dark phantom of sacerdotalism begotten of materialised conceptions, at the sight of which, things spiritual shudder and vanish. It introduces exclusiveness amidst the brotherhood of believers, and destroys the sense of individual responsibility. Christian ministers are not called to offer substitutionary sacrifices for those under their oversight. They are not vicarial. They are representative; and their duties demand above all else the spiritual qualities of personal faith and holiness.

The way out of sacerdotalism is to hold more firmly to the spiritual teaching of Jesus Christ. Materialistic ideas of the ministry, Church, and sacraments will decline before a more correct knowledge of the fundamental fact that God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. He, as the ethical Spirit, reveals Himself to all who are of His Spirit. As the ship long baffled in the Sargasso Sea by light winds, and retarded by the thickening weed, no longer heeds the futile encumbrance when once she feels her sails filling with the breeze, but

joyously cleaves the homeward path in freedom,
so the Church, impelled by the Spirit, shall pass
on its home-bound course unimpeded by all en-
circling driftweed, till it appear perfect before God
in Zion.

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